COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

STAN *the* Man Lee

Maestro of the Marvel Mythos!

No. 61 July 1998
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Special 1998 Chicago Comic Convention Issue!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 61
July 1998

STAN the Man LEE!

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A Gemstone Publication

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Issue Number 61, July 1998

WANTED: ORIGINAL ART

Super Villian Team-Up #14

If you have any of these **COVERS** (even if they are not for sale) please contact me. I can leave you with an offer (and I can stop looking for it) Cash Paid or will trade for other art or comics (Gold, Silver, Modern)
PLEASE SAVE THIS LIST…it is good forever! Collecter correspondence / other peoples want lists welcome !!!!!

Art listed is for **Cover Art** unless otherwise noted in this list

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Avengers #161

ROSS ANDRU
DC presents - 12
Superman- 349
JIM APARO
Adventure - 452 (Aquaman)
Aquaman #62, 63
Brave & Bold-130, 136
Manbat-2
Showcase #94,95,96 (Doom Patrol)
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Action #478, 483
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Freedom Fighters #9, 10, 14
Justice League #148, 158
Kamandi - 47, 50, 52, 56, 60
Secret Society Super Villans
#5-9, 11-15
Secret Society Sup. Vill. Spectacular
(DC Special Series #6)
Superman #327
Super Team Family #8 (Challengers)
New Gods #4, 15
Teen Titans (Old) #50 - 53
JOHN BUSCEMA
Thor #262
SAL BUSCEMA
Hulk #207 (Interior Pages)
JOHN BYRNE
Avengers #166 (Pgs- 1-3) .
181 (Interiors), 186 -190
("no one will pay more for Byrne Avengers covers)
Capt. America #248
Champions #11 (Pgs. 1 - 3)
Champions #12 (Pgs. 2-3)
Iron Man #109
Secret Origins Annual #1
(Doom Patrol)
*Super Villian Team #Up #14
(Doc Doom/ Magneto)
(I will pay stupid $ for this cover!!!)
*X-Men #108 - 142

(Covers , + Interiors) (Please call)
(Also any "odd-ball" covers Byrne did from 1975-1986)
(Also any Two In One, Team-Up, F.F., or Capt. America)
ERNIE CHAN (CHUA)
DC Super Stars #8 (of Space)
9 (Man Behind the Gun)
Flash #243
Kamandi #45, 48, 49
Secret Society Super Villains - 1 - 5
Teen Titans (Old) #44
Champions #17
Invaders #29
DAVE COCKRUM
Avengers #169, 175, 177
Hulk #207
Iron Man #110
Marvel Premier #48 (Antman)
Star Wars #17
Super Villian Team- Up #12
(Doom / Red Skull)
X-Men - G.S. - 1, 94 - 142
(Most Covers & Interiors, but, especially cover to #109)
GENE COLAN
Tomb of Dracula #62- 64
What if #17 (Old) (Ghost Rider, Capt. Marvel, Spiderwoman)
DICK DILLIN
DC presents #3, 14
DC Superstars #10 (Strange Sports)
(Interior Pages)
Justice League #143, 144, 147, 148
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Shade the Changing Man #3
KIETH GIFFEN
Defenders #44 (Interior Pages)
DICK GIORDANO
Batman #300
Superboy + Legion #253, 254, 257

MIKE GOLDEN
Micronauts #2 - 11
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BOB HALL
Super Villian Team #Up #14
(Interior pages)
RICK HOBERG
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CARMINE INFANTINO
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GIL KANE
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Champions #11, 16
Jungle Action (Black Panther) #14
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Batman Family #17
JACK KIRBY
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(Superman Spect.). 11 (Flash Spec.)
Untold Legend of Batman #2
PABLO MARCOS
Marvel Two In One #39
RON MCLEOD
Marvel Team #Up #86

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Amazing Spiderman #194
Capt. Marvel #47
Defenders #74
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Flash - 268
Kamandi #53 - 55
Secret Society Super Villans #10
Shogun Warriors #3
(other Shogun covers wanted, please call)
Skull the Slayer #1
MIKE MASSER
Kobra #6, 7
Spectacular Spiderman #37
DON NEWTON
New Gods #12 (Splash Page)
Avengers #Annual #9
GEORGE PEREZ
**Avengers #160-165, 166-168, 170-174, 181, 183-185, 191, 192, 194-201 (Especially #161,167, 171, 181)
Avengers Ann. #8 (Int. pages #167) (cover to Kovnac TPBK)
("no one will pay more for Perez Avengers covers than me!)
Crisis Infinite Earths #1 - 12
(Contact me Kevin E. ...)
Justice League #195, 197, 207, 209, 219, 220
(other JLA covers considered)
(centerfold from JLA #195)
Marvel Two In One - 42, 50, 51, 57, 58, 61 - 63
New Team Titans #1 - 50, Annual #3
("also looking for "odd-ball" titles Perez did from 1975 - 1987 such as Marvel Premier w/ Man Wolf, F.F.,X-Men, etc)
KEITH POLLARD
Iron Man #108, 111, 112
Marvel Two In One #55

FRANK ROBBINS
Human Fly #10
JOHN ROMITA JR.
Avengers #176
Defender #62
Iron Man #113 - 117
ALEX ROSS
*Marvels #0 - 4 (any splashes or nice panel pages , please call)
Kingdom Come
(various pages considered)
K. SCHAFFENBERGER
Action #474
MARSHALL ROGERS
Mr. Miracle - DC
House advertisement page - 1977
(also #19 - 25)
ALEX SCHOMBURG
Invaders annual #1
(also Human Torch pages)
JOE STATON
All Star Comics #71-74
"DC Explosion" - DC
House advertisement page - 1978
New Gods #19
Showcase #97, 99 (Power Girl)
100 (Anniversary issue)
Superboy + Legion #249
HERB TRIMPE
Godzilla #3, 21
DAVE WENZEL
Avengers #177 (Interiors)
ALAN WEISS
Shazam #(1977) #34
WALLY WOOD
All Star Comics #64
RON WILSON
Marvel Two in One #16
UNKNOWN ARTISTS
Invaders #41
Marvel Spotlight #12 (Son of Satan)
Super Villian Team-Up #15
(Doom vs. Red Skull)

Avengers #167

Avengers #181

Avengers #171

JLA #148

Iron Man #109

Stan Lee... Mr. Variety!

Because of the number of images, I opted to do the key to our color section here on the editor's page. I think the variety of Stan Lee-produced books (pgs 37-42) is incredible as are the DC and misc. romance covers (43-44). Since most of the books are from my own collection this time (with able assistance from Craig Rader and Bill Jenks), I've added a few comments about contents/art where space permits. So without further ado...

PAGE 37 - *Astonishing* #40 (Aug 1955); *Billy Buckskin* #1 (Nov 1955); *Crazy* #1 (Dec 1953) Bill Everett, Dave Berg; *Fear* #1 (Nov 1970); *Men's Adventures* #25 (Jan 1954) Joe Sinnott; *Devil-Dog Dugan* #1 (Jul 1956) cvr by John Severin; *Tower Of Shadows* #1 (Sep 1969) Steranko; *Strange Tales Annual* #1 (1962); *Homer the Happy Ghost* #15 (Aug 1957) Dan De Carlo.

PAGE 38 - *Strange Tales* #89 (Oct 1961); *Millie The Model Ann.* #1 (1962); *Battleground* #13 (Sep 1956) "Action At Sedan" by Al Williamson; Amaz. Spider-Man Ann. #2 (1965) contains the brilliant "The Wondrous World of Dr. Strange" by Lee and Ditko; *Conan* #3 (Feb 1971); *Buck Duck* #1 (Jun 1953); *Little Lizzie* #3 (Jan 1954) Howie Post; *Western Kid* #17 (Aug 1957), cvr by John Severin; *Beware!* #1 (Mar 1973).

PAGE 39 - *Strange Tales* #102 (Nov 1962); *Linda Carter, Student Nurse* #5 (May 1962) Al Hartley; *Pinky Lee* #5 (Dec 1955); *Wyatt Earp* #4 (May 1956) cvr by Joe Maneely; *FF Ann.* #1 (1963); *Where Monsters Dwell* #1 (Jan 1970); *G.I. Tales* #4 (Feb 1957) cvr and interior art by John Severin; *Caught* #3 (Dec 1956) "With These Hands" by A. Torres; *Journey Into Mystery* #62 (Nov 1960).

PAGE 40 - *Young Men* #24 (Dec 1953); *Amaz. Adult Fantasy* #7 (Dec 1961); *World of Fantasy* #17 (Apr 1959); *Adv. Into Weird Worlds* #16 (Mar 1953); *Della Vision* #1 (Apr 1955) Al Hartley; *Adv. Into Terror* #14 (Win 1952-53); *Frontier Western* #8 (Apr 1957) cvr by John Severin, Gray Morrow; *Amaz. Spider-Man* #33 (Feb 1966); *Strange Tales* #61 (Feb 1958) Bernie Krigstein.

PAGE 41 - *Suspense* #4 (Aug 1950); *Battlefield* #1 (Apr 1952) Russ Heath, Dave Berg; *Wild Western* #48 (Mar 1956) cvr by John Severin, "The Tough Hombre" by Stan Lee and Al Williamson; *Spy Thrillers* #4 (May 1955); *Millie the Model* #93 (Nov 1959); *Amaz. Detective Cases* #12 (May 1952); *Climax Adv. Comic* #3 (100 pages, early-mid 1950s, squarebound, b&w reprints of Stan Lee-written Atlas comics, Australian/British); *Los 4 Fantasticos* #11 (Jul 31, 1963, Mexico); *Strange Tales* #5 (early 1960s, 24 pages, b&w reprint of *Amaz. Spider-Man* #1, Australian/British).

Page 42 (Atlas/Marvel Romance) - *Girl Confessions* #28 (Sep 1953) Jay Scott Pike, Jerry Robinson; *True Secrets Comics* #38 (May 1956) Vince Colletta, Jerry Robinson; *Teen-Age Romance* #81 (May 1961); *Lovers* #28 (May 1950); *My Own Romance* #37 (Apr 1954) cvr and interior by Jay Scott Pike; *Western Life Romances* #1 (Dec 1949); *Stories of Romance* #11 (Apr 1957) Vince Colletta; *Love Tales* #58 (Aug 1952) Jay Scott Pike; *Love Romances* #80 (Mar 1959) Jay Scott Pike.

PAGE 43 (DC Romance) - *Heart Throbs* #59 (Apr/May 1959); *Girls' Romances* #69 (Jul 1960); *Secret Hearts* #68 (Jan 1961); *Girls' Love Stories* #71 (Jun 1960); *Secret Hearts* #51 (Nov 1958); *Young Romance* #174 (Sep 1971); *Falling In Love* #24 (Feb 1959); *Girls' Love* #34 (Mar/Apr 1955) Alex Toth; *Girls' Romances* #61 (Jul 1959).

PAGE 44 (Misc. Romance) - *Bride's Secrets* (Ajax/Farrell, unknown); *G.I. Sweethearts* #42 (Nov 1954, Quality); *Sweethearts* #83 (Jan 1950, Fawcett); *True Love Stories* #16 (Dec 1957, Charlton); *Untamed Love* #2 (Mar 1950, Comic Magazines); *Teen-Age Confidential Confessions* #1 (Jul 1960, Charlton); *Heart Throbs* #45 (Oct 1956, Quality); *Young Romance* #10 (Vol. 1, #4, Mar/Apr 1949, Prize); *Young Love* #70 (Vol. 7, #1, Apr/May 1956, Prize) scarce Kirby.

Gary

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Mark Evanier writes

In your June issue (another fine one, by the way), Paul Wardle speculates that "Gary Michaels," who inked the early Gene Colan Iron Man stories, must be Johnny Craig because, says Paul, the inking style is virtually identical.

I don't think the inking styles look anything alike, but I do know that "Gary Michaels" was a pseudonym for the late Jack Abel. Abel was another one of those artists who, like Colan, was doing work for DC at the time and working for Marvel under another moniker. In fact, Abel inked the last story of that run under his own name. Cheers!

Mark Evanier, California

Gary Michaels

Just got CBM a couple of days ago, and I'm still going through the articles. I like to take my time and enjoy them, word by word.

I did finish reading Marketplace Mail and wanted to respond to some questions that Paul Wardle of Toronto, Canada, raised. He was wondering about the identity of the inker for "Adam Austin" by the pseudonym of "Gary Michaels." It's true that "Adam Austin" was really Gene Colan. However, Paul thought the mysterious "Gary Michaels" was Johnny Craig. This is incorrect. "Gary Michaels" was really Jack Abel. In my tribute article about Jack Abel, in CBM # 46, April, 1997, I mentioned that Jack used that name when he was inking over Gene Colan's pencils. "Gary Michaels" is actually the name of Jack Abel's son. I learned that information from talking to Steve Mitchell and Rick Parker while I was researching my article.

I hope that this clears up who "Gary Michaels" was for Paul Wardle. Now, if only Johnny Craig would grant someone an interview.

Steve Fears, Oklahoma

Letter from Lou

Was good to see the Planet Comics article in print... hope CBM readers enjoyed it! Here's a couple of answers to questions posed in your lettercol. 1) Jeff Bass asked, "Besides Sad Sack, did Harvey even publish a War comic?" You betchum, Red Ryder. Check out Warfront for the proof. Even better, check out the last few issues... they have art by Adkins and Wood.

2) Paul Wardle wanted to know who "Gary Michaels" was. He was Jack Abel. Paul also wanted a Dan Adkins interview. I did one for an ish of Comics Interview, which may still be available from Dave Kraft.

3) Bob Kuhl asked if someone had done any articles on the Jay Ward character books. I wish! Batman alumnus Jerry Robinson did work on an ish of Rocky and His Fiendish Friends, and Al Kilgore, Sergio Aragones, and several other worthies put their hands to the adventures of Bullwinkle and his friends. They're still fun books to read, and they still have the double-level appeal (outright fun for the kids, satire for the grownups) that the TV shows did. That's all.

Lou Mougin, Texas

Alex Schomburg 1905-1998

Another legend has left our midst. Last Tuesday, April 8, 1998, artist Alex Schomburg passed away. He was 92 years old. So much has been written about Alex in the past few years, I feel as though everyone knows his story. From an advertising agency in New York with his brothers, or on his own doing backgrounds for the National Screen Service, Alex Schomburg's life and legacy of art is our lasting gift of his presence here on Earth.

I never had the privilege to have met the man, but I feel as though I have known him for years from the unsurpassed beauty, quality, scope, and excellence of his art. An indispensable chronicling of his art exists in, "CHROMA The Art of Alex Schomburg" by Jon Gustafson. I will rely on that source to showcase Alex's artistic flexibility far better than my meager writing skills can conjure through words. I want instead to focus on where and how I knew Alex best... in comics.

When I sold my childhood comic collection back in 1989, I had amassed virtually all the Silver Age keys and runs I could aspire to. I found myself on the endless "upgrade" treadmill of books as a collecting goal. But with the release of Ernie Gerber's Photo Journal, Vol. 1, a whole new world opened up to me. A world inhabited by Lou Fine, Jack Cole, Jack Burnley, L.B. Cole, and most especially to me... Alex Schomburg. Being a history buff, I *(Continued on page 10)*

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All American (1940)
9 VG 2nd Ultraman $220
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9 VF++ Scarce in this cond. $100
Black Cat
22 NM+ edge tanning file copy $150
Blonde Phantom
12 VG/F 1st one . . $300
Blue Beetle
41 NM "C-3-8" marking sharp $175
Daredevil (1941)
3 VG+ (some tos) . $300
Ellery Queen
(1952 TV) VF/VF- nice book $200
Exploits of Daniel Boone (1955)
1 NM $175
Four Color
5 FN/VF
1st Smillin Jack . . $275
354 VF-/VF
Raggedy Ann $50
544 NM Rob Roy . . $80
644 NM
S.Walter Raleigh . . $55
684 NM
Helen of Troy $110
Two or More FC, take 10% off
Famous Authors
12 FN/VF Svengali . $80
4-Most
V2/#4 NM+ Mile High Hitler cov. $300
V2/#3 NM
Mile High $175
V5/#3 NM
Mile High $100
V5/#4 NM
Mile High $100
Funnies
46 NM Hawkeye? . $325
51 NM- Hawkeye? $295
Hans Christian Anderson
1953 Giant NM- . . $110
King
9 VG Christmas cov. . . . $165
Little Giant
2 FN/VF Larson
(no markings) . . . $275
3 FN/VF Larson
(no markings) . . . $275
Master
25 NM- Utah Copy $700
Nickel (1938-Dell)
1 VF+ $375
Pep
6 VG $155
Planet
72 FN/VF $135
Popular
53 VF- good buy . . $85
60 VF-
origin Supermind . $120
97 NM, 99 NM-/NM
each $110 both . . $210
117 NM, 119 NM
each $70 both . . . $130
Smash
2 VF-/VF $450
Star Trek (1967 GK)
1 FN/VF scarce . . $200
Superior Stories
1 VF/NM
Invisible Man $100
Super (1938)
5 abt VG nice buy $125
Tarzan's Jungle Annual
6 VF/NM Dell Giant $125
USA
1 VG/FN $2700
2 VG+ yes, Hitler on cover $600
Victory (1941)
1 VG/FN Everett art reduced $525
Whiz
3(4) Apr. '40
VG+ $525
4 May '40
1/2" sq. pc. out cov. edge ow/VG $295
5 VG+ $400
16 VG+ (TOS) Spy Smasher vs. Cap . $225
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1st Cap. Mrv. Jr. $1400
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MARKETPLACE MAIL

Continued from page 8

have many times over the years immersed myself in the W.W.II era. Alex's unequaled propaganda covers during that conflict, I can't help but hope, hastened the demise of the Axis. But my eyes were opened by his consistently wonderful cinematic covers with boiling gouts of the enemy being dispatched by towering, larger than life heroes. Caricatured swarms of Japanese and German denizens challenged Captain America, The Torch, Submariner, and The Black Terror.

But it was the WAY they were challenged! Alex's fertile mind could realize super-science weapons as well as demonic deathtraps which ALL looked as though they would REALLY WORK!! There were always little machine-gun nests, or dagger throwing thugs crammed into every wall, nook, and cranny of his covers. They just draw you into them, as you imagine the movement in each little vignette of peril… frozen in action waiting for our imaginations to help conquer the foe!!

It is a testament to the man for how MANY of these triumphs he produced (hundreds!), but whether you just discovered a new one, or you are looking at one again for the umpteenth time, Alex's magic works! Airbrush artist supreme, Schomburg's post-war work carries on, albeit less frenetically with robots, hooded-men-aces, and science-fiction themes. Metal LOOKS like metal, and water looks like water… how did he do it? The only thing more menaced than the Axis or criminals were Schomburg's damsels in distress! They all had the same face, tight waist, and glorious gams!! Terror did not ruin that lyric face, which was always waiting patiently for the hero to rescue her.

All of Alex Schomburg's heroes could not defeat what the ravages of time wrought on him. And although we have lost his mortal shell, that which is him in his art of all types which showed his genius of line, proportion, and form will endure forever.

Stephen H. Gentner, Oregon

Likee Soupee

Thanks for the copy of CBM #60 with my Blackhawk article. The whole issue looks really good! Glad to see Reed Crandall starting to get his "props."

Just a very, very minor point that only a pedantic nit picky individual like myself (looking at an edition of his own writing no less) would even pick up on: Chop Chop never spoke "PIGEON" English… he spoke "PIDGIN" English. (That was not a typo or misspelling on my part).

"Pidgin" is a linguistic term (akin to a "Creole") which denotes a mixture of languages, generally used as a "lingua franca" (I'm just full of linguistic lingo, ain't I?) between people speaking dissimilar lan- *(Continued on page 12)*

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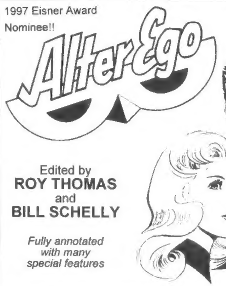

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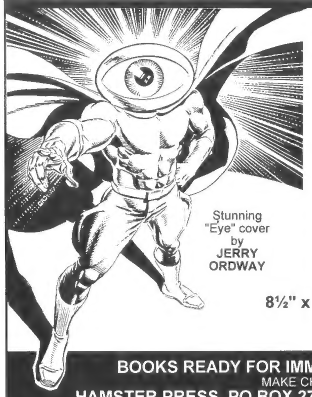

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guages. The term actually applied originally, I believe, to the weird argot that arose when Englishmen first opened China in the nineteenth century and started doing business, each group having to overcome the other's totally alien pronunciations and linguistic concepts. The funny thing is, in reality Pidgin English was not the silly "Me likee soupee" stuff we joke about now. It was a very usable, intelligent halfway meeting point between speakers of the various Chinese dialects and garrulous English sailors and traders. Anyway, best wishes and keep up the good work.

Tony Gleeson, California

No Photo-Journal Volume 5?!

Spoke to Ernie Gerber about his upcoming DC Photo-Journal Guide and was given some sad news. It appears that the project has been indefinitely postponed. The publisher has decided that the industry demand for these books has declined and thus they will not be published for the time being. This *(Continued on page 14)*

Horak's Humor

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To find out what those kids did with the comics... turn to page 80!

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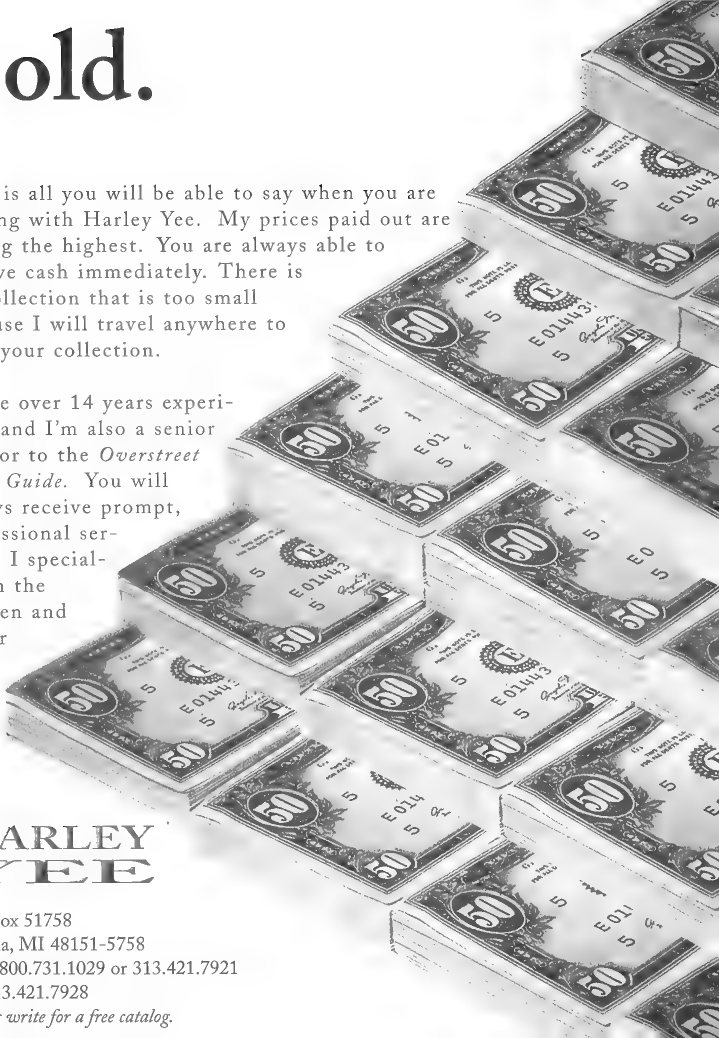

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Continued from page 12

is unfortunate considering how essential the previous Journal Guides have been to the hobby.

I find it hard to believe that there isn't a very large group of DC Silver Age collectors out there who (like me) have been anxiously awaiting publication of these volumes, 90% of which have already been photographed. The first two volumes would have covered DC's Silver Age up to 1973. Certain titles like Superboy would have been extended further back to show the pre-Silver Age beginnings of their runs with issue #1.

I grew up on DC titles from the Silver Age. It's unfortunate that my collection was disposed of during one of my less lucid decades (sound familiar?). As I now attempt to put together runs of my favorite titles from this period a Photo-Journal Guide for these books would have been of inestimable value. I must echo the sentiment previously expressed in CBM's Marketplace Mail that the essential tools for serious comic book collectors remain the Overstreet Guides; your own Comic Book Marketplace; and Ernie Gerber's Photo-Journal Guides.

Could I be wrong? Is the publisher right? Is there no big market for these books? Would collectors not like to see all the covers to DC's classic Silver Age? Would such a work not be immensely popular and indispensable to the hobby?

Alan Glick, Florida

Seventh Heaven

Just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your magazine and look forward to it every month. I'm now in seventh heaven with those early issues of CBM I acquired. It's like I have a batch of Silver Age gems to read and I'm just taking as much time as I want to so I won't go through them too fast. I buy very few new comics these days but I look forward to CBM more than any of them. It's very rare that any magazine can take me back to the good ol' days but CBM does it every month. We didn't know how good we had it.

Terry Perez, via E-mail

Stirring up our ant hill

Well, that does it. I've been quiet long enough, and now I need to say my piece. Actually, there's two things I want to say. First, you are publishing easily the most enjoyable comics-related magazine on the stands today, and for that matter, in memory. You strike a perfect balance between super- *(Continued on page 72)*

Buying The Edgar Church Collection!

There's nothing like it! After 25 years in the business, I've come to the conclusion that there's never going to be a find of any type of collectibles as incredible as the late Edgar Church's collection of comics.

In fact, it's my goal to reunite as much of that collection as possible. That's why we're publishing this exclusive Buy List. Many experienced collectors rightly treasure their "Mile High" comics and aren't interested in parting with them. Sometimes circumstances change, though, so if you have the right books and they are in the unrestored original condition, I'm ready to pay you **at least** 2x Guide in instant cash (regardless of publisher). If you have other comics from the Mile High collection (particularly those in NM to NM+), I'm interested in those as well. Send me your sale list.

Edgar Church's collection represents a standard for collectors. Markets may fluctuate, but the demand for high grade, pedigreed Golden Age and early Silver Age comics never does. Such comics attract positive attention from outside the industry and reflect well on us as collectors. I'm enthusiastic about the history of the medium, and I'm bullish on its future.

This is an on-going project, so this issue's list is just a sampler. **CBM #62** will carry the first expanded Edgar Church Collection Buy List. The buy list will also be updated on the Diamond International Galleries website at www.diamondgalleries .com.

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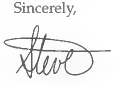

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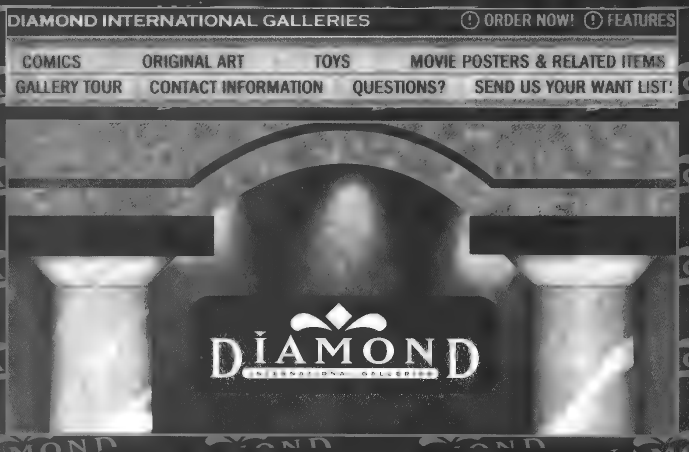

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Heads Up!

By Pat S. Calhoun

The more graphic crime and horror comic books of the early 1950s (before the industry started it's "Comics Code" of self-censorship), found a stock of images that described at a glance the gruesome thrills that the book would give its buyer. Few things connote grisly fantasy more than severed heads that continue to live. The following are three excellent examples of heads freed from their bodies yet somehow still functioning.

Atlas fantasy alone could cover this topic as disembodied heads were a common occurrence—on the covers or just rolling through the pages of a yarn inside. *Strange Tales* #16 (March 1953) features cover and story art on "You Can't Kill Me" by Harry Anderson, a superb artist with a fine-line style who specialized in period pieces and antique atmospheres. This masterpiece, set in turn-of-the-century Paris, is a tale of a scientist who invents a way to sew a severed head back onto its body and revive it, his daughter who made a poor choice of lovers; and her thief-murderer boyfriend due for a date with the guillotine. The daughter sweet-talks daddy into "volunteering" to restore her killer paramour after he's "shortened," but the scientist manages to administer a healthy dose of poetic justice into the job.

The other highlight of the issue is "They Made Me a Ghost" by Stan Lee and Mike Sekowsky. This is yet another "Death Row escape" story, a "deal with the Devil" where the condemned man asks Satan to make him a ghost so he can haunt the judge who sentenced him to die. Satan grants his wish, knowing he'll see that a ghost can easily find his way into an eternal hell.

Although Atlas had a dozen fantasy titles when this issue came out, only *Strange Tales* and *Journey Into Mystery* endured into the 1960s.

One might not think that an "obscure" (though long-lived) superhero title from this era would be the best source for such horrific themes, but Quality's *Doll Man* #41 (August 1952) cover-features a classic rendition of "The Headless Horseman," with a tale inside that's spun off Washington Irving's famous character, who had recently been the subject of a Disney animated film. The wonderful cover art is by Reed Crandall and Charles Cuidera.

The story inside is about ex-convict who gets out after a ten-year term, ready to recover his bank robbery loot, except the man has gone insane and decides

Horror was selling so well in 1952 that even superhero titles took to using it on the covers. The classy update of Washington Irving's character on the cover of Doll Man #41 (Aug 1952) is a perfect example.

Ken Bald drew the cover for Forbidden Worlds #25 (Jan 1954), effectively illustrating the thrilling tale of a murderer pursued by his victim's head. The late 1950's comics scene still had a hint of the post-War and pre-Code "all ages" approach, but even that was fading as niche marketing triumphed and turned comic books... into kid's stuff.

to ride around Central Park with an oversized suit where the collar conceals his real noggin, carrying a realistic electronic head. The compact crime-fighter subdues the poor soul in a bizarre eight-pager.

Harry Anderson's art wonderfully conveys an old world flavor on Strange Tales #16 (Mar 1953)... one of the best of the many Atlas decapitation covers.

The second entry is four delicious pages of Torchy—a young lady who doesn't need to perform super feats, just being herself is super enough. This episode has her donating some time as a nurse's aide, but the patients she sees feel better too fast—causing commotion until she wanders into surgery where the man on the table sits up and says "You can stitch me up later, Doc! Right now I have some business to attend to!" Gill Fox did the drawing with a sure smooth touch and ample attention to the curves.

The final Doll Man yarn in this issue is "The Beast Man," wherein Darrel Dane's assistant makes a play for his fiancee. Dane, the young scientist who can condense his body, is conducting an experiment trying to isolate a gorilla's strength into a serum. The hapless assistant, thinking he might win Martha's affections if he were bigger and stronger, steals the serum and uses it, not knowing that it's untested and may have dangerous side-effects. He turns into a tough guy and starts pushing Darrel and Martha around, but the side-effects kick in and he starts to become an gorilla-man. It's curious hokum, but the book still stands pretty tall on the basis of the incredible cover and gets extra credit for Torchy's charms.

The floating head on the cover of *Forbidden Worlds* #25 (January 1954) has a ghostly look to it, but in the inside story it is the actual severed head of the victim that haunts his murderer. "Hallahan's Head" is a terrific tale, with awesome art by Kenneth Landau. In 1941 Brazil a Yank hires a native to kill his business associate so he can file sole claim on land for a rubber plantation and tells the native to bring back the man's head to prove the deed. But the native—who the boss doesn't realize is a witch doctor—gets killed by a jaguar after chopping Hallahan's head off. Only his black magic can help him deliver the head, which begins a self-propelled quest to unite itself with the man who contracted the crime.

The plantation owner, after glimpsing the head coming at him through the jungle, flees back to the USA. During the next ten years he hears news stories of a head seen swimming up the Atlantic coastline. It catches up with him just after he's had a mansion built, and his associates and workers are startled when on the day after construction is completed he orders it—after locking the head in a closet—dynamited! After that he flees once more, but of course the head survives the explosion and tracks him to the inevitable conclusion. It's all done just so

This issue boasts a couple of other worthwhile weirdies. "The Venetian Music Box" is a standard vampire story lifted a notch above the norm by the expressive art of Harry Lazarus. And "The Dead Remember" is the tale of an ex-Concentration Camp Commander trying to revive the Nazi party in Germany a decade after the War—until the supernatural steps in . The story is satisfying, and the art is fantastically lurid.

Forbidden Worlds was a long-running title for the American Comics Group (ACG), surviving until 1967 when the company closed up shop.

There are many other "hovering heads of horror" among the pre-Code fantasy books, including clever variations on the theme like the headless body chasing a woman on the cover of Fawcett's *Strange Suspense Stories* #2. The most potent images were unleashed at the time when newsstand competition was the fiercest and comic book sales were at their all-time high.

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Collecting the Western Genre!

by Michelle Nolan

Strap on 'yor six guns and see if you can draw a bead on the best ways to collect Western comics... without spending 'yor entire poke... or goin' plum loco!

Have you ever had the feeling that there are just too many Western comics to collect? Or perhaps you're part of the group that feels Western comics all seem the same? It's easy to get both impressions, because there probably are too many Western comics for any single hobbyist to amass a collection that includes every single issue. As I discussed in *CBM* #59, there were no fewer than 3,478 comics with Western themes published through 1959, and that doesn't include Golden Age anthology titles with a Western character or two.

Even though the genre faded dramatically in popularity in all areas of popular culture beginning in the mid-1960s, there still have been close to 5,000 Western comics published (maybe more).

But the perception that Western comics are all the same is way off the mark. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth as the variety in Western titles is incredible!

Even though I'm not a Western comics expert, I've found a number of ways to collect Westerns, beyond the obvious (by company, first issues, titles, etc.).

I don't collect long runs of most Westerns (other than those from the DC Comics stable), but I've still managed to amass a representative collection of 600 or so pre-1960 Westerns, or about one fifth of the total published during the period.

It has been an enjoyable chase, and it still continues. Every now and then I'll run across a cover I can't pass up... even if I'm not particularly interested in most issues of the title. In fact, I love rummaging through boxes of Western comics, because you never know when you're going to come across something striking, historic, or just plain bizarre.

The wonderful *Gerber Photo-Journal* didn't have room to roam through the entire field of Western comics, so there are still plenty of wonderful cover discoveries to be made. And Western comics are often so compelling that even the *Photo-Journal* doesn't do some of the covers justice.

Another delightful facet of collecting Western comics is that most of them are still affordable! You can find many stunning examples of the art of the Western in the $5 to $25 range (pun fully intended and, as always, shamelessly not apologized for! Besides, it's the *CBM* editors who suffer most from my puns.)

For those who are still uneasy about how to start a Western comics collection, here are a dozen ways you can get a handle on the nearly infinite variety of titles and themes:

Simon & Kirby created the Western hero Bulls Eye (#4, Feb 1955) for their short-lived Mainline Publications.

Fawcett's Lash LaRue "The King of the bullwhip," (#1, Sum 1949) was often called "the western Humphrey Bogart."

Part II

• You can collect photo covers. Most of these came from Dell and Fawcett, but several other companies also produced them, including some attractive examples of lesser-known stars.

• You can collect comics devoted to the names of real movie stars, such as Roy Rogers and Lash LaRue, to name two of my favorites.

• You can collect characters who originated in the comic strips, such as Red Ryder and King of Royal Mounted. Do you realize that some of the oldest readers of these strips in the 1930s actually lived through the settling of the West? A reader 80 years old when King of the Royal Mounted debuted in 1935 would have been a young adult when General Custer died at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876!

• You can collect characters who originated in other media, such as the Lone Ranger (first heard on radio in 1933) or Rocky Lane (played in the movies by Allan Lane, who later became the voice of the talking horse Mr. Ed).

• You can collect movie adaptations, such as *The Searchers* from Dell or *Code of the Silver Sage* from Fawcett.

• You can collect television adaptations, such as *Gunsmoke*, *Wagon Train*, *Wild Wild West*, or *Steve Donovan* from Dell.

• You can collect characters created exclusively for comics, such as Black Diamond from Lev Gleason or the Hooded Horseman from ACG.

• You can collect Western anthologies, such as Six-Gun Heroes based on movie heroes from Fawcett and *Western Comics* and *All-Star Western* with strictly comic-book characters from DC.

• You can collect classic characters, such as Zorro by Johnston McCulley or the Cisco Kid by O'Henry, both adapted by Dell with success.

• You can collect the sub-genre of Indians, such as Long Bow from Fiction House or Indian Chief from Dell.

• You can collect the sub-genre of horses, such as Silver from the *Lone Ranger* or Trigger from *Roy Rogers*. (By the by, the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* provides a wonderful way to win bar bets with old times. Virtually every Western hero's horse is named in Overstreet.)

• And last but not least, you can collect adaptations of historical figures, such as Davy Crockett, Wyatt Earp and Jim Bowie.

Just referencing the above, it's easy to see that the sheer variety of Western comics is staggering!

One of my goals has been to collect at least one issue of each Western title named for a character, no matter in what form of media he or she originated. (I don't think I'll ever get an example of every Western character who ever rode in an anthology. Not to worry, some of them are truly forgettable).

I do think Westerns represent a significant slice of Americana... and to have a collection of Western heroes ranging from those of world-wide fame like the Lone Ranger to those remembered by nobody but a few collectors—is important. When was the last time you heard anything about Whip Wilson or the Silver Kid?

Do you know how many Western movie stars are represented by comic titles with their name? Fawcett published 467 Western comics (not counting appearances in anthologies, such as Golden Arrow in *Whiz Comics*), including 14 titles devoted to Western film stars, ranging from the immortal *Hopalong Cassidy* and *Tom Mix* to short-lived titles devoted to *Smiley Burnett* and *Andy Devine*. The others were devoted to Gene Autry (1941-43 before Dell took over), *Hopalong Cassidy* (and a separate title for the actor who played him, Bill Boyd), Gabby Hayes, Monte Hale, Tom Mix, Lash LaRue, Rocky Lane, Tex Ritter, Bob Steele, Ken Maynard and Rod Cameron.

Fawcett dominated the Western hero market for a five-year period (1949-53), and most of their Western comics had beautiful photo covers, some of which have to be seen to be believed. Some of them are truly stunning, and they were among the best-selling comics of their day.

Ironically, the end of Fawcett's comic book publishing division (the company's last issues were dated January 1954) coincided with the end of the movie series "B Western," as Poverty-

Pioneer West Romances #4 (no month, 1950) contains stories that are titled on the cover but not on the inside. This is actually a Western adventure comic featuring reprints from Firehair's appearances in the Ficiton House title Rangers Comics. Silver Age collectors are more familiar with the Kubert version of the character in Showcase #85-87.

Row studios like Republic and Monogram slowly faded from the scene with the advent of television.

Fawcett, however, wasn't the only company that featured Western movie heroes, many of which replaced the Golden Age superheroes in the late 1940s in the fight for readers' affections.

Dell later became best known for TV western adaptations, but the firm earlier acquired the rights to publish Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Buck Jones, Johnny Mack Brown, Wild Bill Elliott... and Rex Allen the last of the wonderful line of singing-cowboy stars.

The other Western movie stars in comics were Dale Evans and Jimmy Wakely (DC); Tim Holt and the Durango Kid starring Charles Starrett (ME); Whip Wilson and Reno Browne (Marvel); Tim McCoy and Sunset Carson (Charlton); John Wayne (Toby); and Hoot Gibson, the Range Busters, and Will Rogers (Fox).

I always thought it was odd that *Dale Evans* was published by DC while husband was published *Roy Rogers* by Dell. (Dell ultimately did acquire the rights to the *Dale Evans* title after DC's run of #1-24 ended in 1952.) *Tim Holt* and the *Durango Kid* enjoyed profitable runs of 41 magnificent issues apiece, even lasting a couple of years after their characters ended their first-run movie appearances. Comics historian Bill Black of AC Comics, the hombre who is leading expert on Western comics in the world, has written numerous wonderful retrospectives of many characters, especially those from Magazine Enterprises (ME).

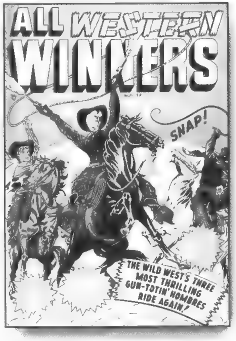
However, most of the non-Fawcett movie adaptations lasted only a few issues at best, and even some of Fawcett's attempts were unsuccessful. I can't imagine why the company tried to publish titles devoted to comical sidekicks like Andy Devine and Smiley Burnett. Perhaps Fawcett's editors were misled by the success of the comic devoted to Gabby Hayes (who was so much more than a comical sidekick).

Fawcett even tried to make a hit of a mythical movie character, *Bob Colt*, which lasted ten issues from 1950-52. Bob Colt was modeled on the photo covers by the impossibly handsome Steve Holland, who went on to star a couple of years later in the short-lived *Flash Gordon* television show.

It's fascinating to note that Timely/Marvel/Atlas didn't try to license any Western characters, except for Whip Wilson and cowgirl Reno Browne from Monogram. They lasted only three issues apiece (all in 1950). Amazingly, at the same time this pair of Monogram stars also appeared on *Western Romance* comic covers from Standard (*Western Hearts*), Crestwood (*Western Love*) and Marvel (*Western Life Romances*). I guess tiny Monogram Studios sold as many movie stills as it possibly could!

What Marvel/Atlas did publish (from 1948 until the company's implosion in 1957) was as many house-created Western characters as possible... far more than any other company! The first, and commercially most successful, was Kid Colt in 1948. *Kid Colt* (isn't that a wonderfully generic name?) survived the Marvel/Atlas implosions of 1950 and 1957 and the title ran for 31 years except for a brief interruption of 1968-69.

Are you ready for the roll call of the other made-for-Marvel gunslingers with their own titles at some point in the 1948-57 period? Hold on to 'yore saddle horn boys... there was Blaze Carson, Tex Morgan, Tex Taylor, Rex Harte, Black Rider, Gunhawk, Red Warrior, Billy Buckskin and no fewer than 11 other Kids besides Kid Colt! There was Two-Gun Kid, Apache Kid, Arizona Kid, Texas Kid, Outlaw Kid, Ringo Kid, Western Kid, Rawhide Kid, Kid from Texas, Kid from Dodge City, and finally Kid Slade (who was Matt Slade in his first four issues).



Is it any wonder that when the Davy Crockett craze died down in 1957, and Charlton killed off its Crockett comic after eight issues, that the title was continued as *Kid Montana*?

Until then, however, I guess other comic book publishers figured Marvel had a monopoly on the name Kid. The only other Kids in comics were the short-lived *Silver Kid* in five issues from Stanmor in 1954-55 and the *Oklahoma Kid* in four issues from Ajax in 1957-58.

During the height of popularity of Fawcett's photo covers, Marvel briefly tried the same thing with its mythical characters, trying to make the likes of Rex Harte seem like a real western movie star! I don't know the origins behind every such Marvel cover, but the cover of *Black Rider* #8 (the first issue) features the one and only Stan Lee behind the Black Rider's mask!

Other than the characters from Marvel/Atlas, no fewer than 41 Western characters created exclusively for comics appeared through the 1950s. Other than DC's frontier hero, Tomahawk, only one of those 41 characters ran more than 33 issues—Lev Gleason's Black Diamond, a well-written series that lasted 52 issues from 1949-56 (#9-60).

I suspect the success of the Black Diamond series owed much to the popularity of ABC's *Lone Ranger* television show, which ran from 1949-57 in its first-run versions and went into the endless syndication. The Black Diamond was the best of several Lone Ranger knockoffs, which also included the moderately successful Black Rider and Hooded Horseman. Until the final six issues, when the Comic Code symbol occupied the upper right corner of the covers, Gleason always ran a distinct head shot of the Black Diamond, looking much like the Lone Ranger.

Black Diamond's stories, however, were always original and told in depth, with a lot more personality and characterization than most Western comics offered. But then, that was the Gleason formula, and it worked pretty well for his small but superbly produced line of comics.

The commercial nature of the Western in the movies and on

The World War II superhero comic, All-Winners, made a brief return with #1 in 1948. Then with issue #2 (Win 1948-49) the word "Western" was added to the logo and it was transformed into an anthology title for Marvel's three leading six-gun heroes... Kid Colt, The Two-Gun Kid, & The Black Rider.

television was the driving force behind nearly all the comics, and that leads us to a discussion of the historical figure in the comic book Western.

The way most comics present them, of course, historical figures were about as real as the Lone Ranger or the Durango Kid. Nevertheless, they were popular, much in the same way the movies took advantage of the legends of Buffalo Bill and Wyatt Earp.

The first such historical figure to be used in comics was Annie Oakley, the star of a humorous four-issue Marvel comic in 1948, which ranks clearly in the esoteric category (to say the least). The title was revived for #5-11 in 1955-56 to take advantage of the popularity of the syndicated *Annie Oakley* television show starring Gail Davis

The advantage of using historical adaptations was obvious, since publishers could "steal" the character when it became popular on television. Davy Crockett and Wyatt Earp are the best examples, with several different publishers taking a crack at each. Disney could copyright their version of Davy Crockett, of course, but they didn't own the rights to a historical character. In contrast, Dell owned the license for the fictional Lone Ranger and Fawcett owned the rights to print the comic book version of Lash LaRue . . . both proprietary and not historical . . . and therefore not public domain and subject to publication by multiple companies.

Another example is Avon. Avon used almost nothing *but* historical characters for its Western comic books, which included a highly collectible series of one-shots in the early 1950s.

Another fascinating aspect of the Western is that the characters became a world all their own, where fiction and fact were inseparable and where even fictional characters seemed real. Roy Rogers, for example, played a charac ter known by his own name in many of his movies, as did many other star

I wouldn't be at all surprised that if you asked some people to nam famous Western figures of history, the answer might be something like thi "Let's see, there Wyatt Earp, Kit Carson, Davy Crockett, Hopalong Cassidy, th Lone Ranger, Roy Rogers, Tom Mix and Gabby Hayes." Seriously!

When the popularity of the Western was on the wane in comics, only a fe fictional characters were created in 1957, and even they were driven by th nope of gaining sales through fooling kids into thinking they were buyin something they were not.

Charlton (the "poor man's" comic publisher) was notorious for this in th 1950s. Look at some of the "original" characters created by Charlton in th second half of that decade. Masked Raider (a Lone Ranger knockoff); th Texas Rangers; Kid Montana; the Cheyenne Kid (to take advantage of th television show, which was adapted by Dell); Maverick Marshall (an obviou steal from Maverick on TV); and even the Sheriff of Tombstone (anybod remember the short-lived but popular TV show *Tombstone Territory*?).

Tombstone Territory, incidentally, was among the few Westerns not adapt ed by Dell. One can just imagine the squeaky clean Western Publishing exec utives (the folks who created comics for the Dell imprint) muttering to them selves, "How can we publish a comic book with 'Tombstone' in the title?"

So there you have it—the history and collectibility of the comic book Western . . . one of the most underrated and misunderstood genres in the hobby

Thanks for readin' podners . . . here's hopin' ya mosey on over to see me in the very next issue of *CBM*!

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STAN
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Sitting couch-to-couch with Stan Lee was, for this comic book fan, akin to a English Literature professor meeting William Shakespeare. In fact, in many ways Lee is the Shakespeare of comics.

STAN *the* Man Lee

Maestro of the Ma[illegible] Mythos!

INTERVIEWED BY BOB BRODSKY

Writer and editor of Marvel Comics from 1961-1972, Stan injected characterization, realism and a wide-open new style of storytelling into the medium. With Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, Lee conceived the most interesting comic book heroes ever, including Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, Iron Man and the Hulk.

Though the mainstream media soon called the new Marvel characters "heroes with hang-ups," Spider-Man and company actually went far beyond that label. In contrast to all other comic book heroes of the day, the Marvel superheroes spoke with their personalities… not just their super powers.

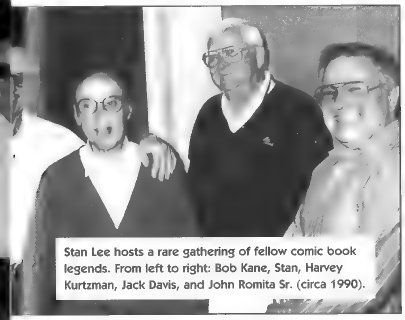
Superb supporting characters like Spider-Man's J. Jonah Jameson and ingenious little touches such as the Yancy Street Gang in *Fantastic Four*, gave Lee's stories added depth. The power of Lee's work was not just the stories he told, but the way that he told them.

By 1965, Lee, Ditko and Kirby's ideas could no longer be contained by single-issue stories and Marvel in turn broke out with dense, multi-part sagas. The company's legendary crossover stories came into being largely because of Lee's decision to base most of his superheroes in New York. This unprecedented concept gave the Marvel characters ample opportunity to fight with, or alongside, each other.

Lee took Marvel's fans to heart as well. While some of the editors at Marvel's "Distinguished Competition" communicated to their readers in a somewhat condescending and parental tone, Lee sounded like a good-natured, bachelor uncle. He called his readers "Marvelites" and created a spirit of community… even family… for them.

Whether the reader walked the hallowed halls of Asgard alongside Thor or prowled Manhattan at midnight with Spider-Man, a Stan Lee story was fast-paced and exciting, with enough nuance to match any good film or novel. Lee more than entertained readers, he respected his audience.

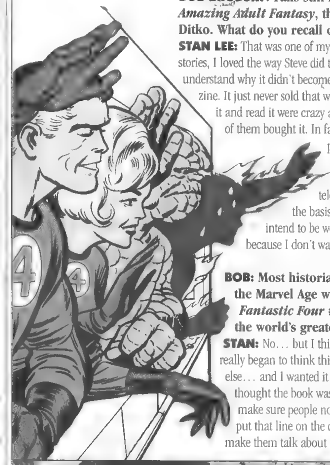
I spoke with Lee just a few weeks ago in his office at Marvel Entertainment in West Los Angeles. Tall, thin and casually well-dressed in white pants and blue denim shirt, Lee was both gracious and compelling. His reputation as one of comic's nicest guys and greatest innovators is well deserved.



Stan Lee hosts a rare gathering of fellow comic book legends. From left to right: Bob Kane, Stan, Harvey Kurtzman, Jack Davis, and John Romita Sr. (circa 1990).

FACING PAGE: **This b&w rendition of an original color painting/poster by Arnie Sawyer celebrates the legend of Stan Lee. Arnie masterfully incorporated the characteristics of 13 of the most famous Marvel characters (including Howard the Duck's Hat perched on one of Daredevil's horns) into Stan's image. CBM is also proud to have Arnie's tribute "portrait" of Smilin' Stan (in full color) on the cover of our promotional issue of CBM #61… which is available only at the Diamond Comics Distributor's booth at the 1998 ChicagoCon.**

STAN the Man



BOB BRODSKY: Fans still rave about the run of *Amazing Adult Fantasy*, that you did with Steve Ditko. What do you recall of that project?
STAN LEE: That was one of my favorite books. I loved those stories, I loved the way Steve did them, and I never could understand why it didn't become our most popular magazine. It just never sold that well. The people who bought it and read it were crazy about it… but not enough of them bought it. In fact, I still have a lot of those plots and story ideas on file… and I think a lot of them could be used for television shows and even as the basis for a movie idea. In fact, I intend to be working on them soon because I don't want to let them die

BOB: Most historians mark the start of the Marvel Age with the release of *Fantastic Four* #1 in 1961. Was it truly the world's greatest comic magazine?
STAN: No… but I think by the third issue that I really began to think this is as good as anything else… and I wanted it to be talked about. I thought the book was so good that I wanted to make sure people noticed it and I thought if I put that line on the cover it would be sure to make them talk about it. I also thought they may buy a copy in order to find out just how crazy Stan Lee really is, putting a line like that on the cover of *Fantastic Four* #3. I just wanted the book to be noticed and attention to be paid to it. I wasn't sure it was the world's greatest comic but I thought it was one of the best things we had ever done and I wanted to give it a chance to really sell.

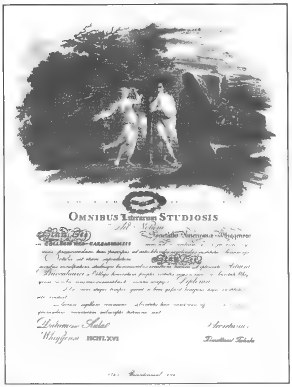
BOB: Why did you revive the Human Torch and include him in the Fantastic Four lineup?
STAN: Well, when I was younger I loved the Torch (and the Sub-Mariner too). I used to avidly read the Golden Age Torch stories. Also I wanted all of the characters in the Fantastic Four to have very distinct and different powers, and it just seemed to me that if a gal was invisible and a guy's body could stretch and somebody else was going to be the strongest guy in the world, what could be totally different? Then it occurred to me that a guy who burst into flame and could fly… well that was it. I remembered the Torch and I thought what a great power for a character… and he isn't around anymore (and that was a shame) and he should be around.

I changed the Torch a little. The original Torch had been an android, so I made the new Torch a human being. The old one was an adult android, so I made the new one a teenager. . Sue Storm's pesky kid brother. But other than those variations he was still the Human Torch. I loved his powers… I loved the idea of a guy who could burst into flame and fly.

There also had to be reasons for the powers… it seems to me there always ought to be a rationale for things. If somebody can fly, there should be a reason for it. Well, if his body is lighter than air and he can be propelled by the energy of the flames… to me that was enough.

Captain America and company carry Stan Lee on their shoulders in the Marvel parade at Shea Stadium… home of the New York Mets during the 1980s.

Twin brothers, Timotheus and Thomas Tulenko, award Stan Lee an honorary degree in 1966.



Stan Lee's honorary degree (shown at left) was awarded in 1966 for "Omnibus Literarum Studiosis" which loosely translated means "The General Study of Literature."

It has always bothered me that Superman has no visible means of propulsion. I mean he's just in the air and he's flying. What's pushing him? When Siegel and Shuster first did Superman he couldn't fly, but he could leap over tall buildings with a single bound. So that always seemed illogical to me that a guy is just in the air… flying. But I figured if a guy can burst into flame it gives some pseudo-scientific explanation for flight. And that's much too long an answer for a very simple question.

BOB: Do you recall why the Hulk's original title was canceled after only six issues?

STAN: Yes. It didn't sell all that well, at least after the first couple of issues. I'll tell you a secret… anytime a book is canceled… no matter what reason people give you. . it is because it didn't sell that well.

I can't remember exactly why it didn't sell because the first few issues were great. It may have been, because in those days Jack Kirby was doing so many of the books with me… that Jack may not have had time to do the Hulk as well as the Fantastic Four and X-Men and whatever else he was doing at the time. I may have felt that the Hulk was maybe the weakest title so I let it go to allow Jack to concentrate on the other titles.

BOB: More evidence, perhaps, to support that possibility was that the last issue, *Hulk* #6, was drawn by Steve Ditko.

STAN: It may have been because Jack didn't have time to do it and Ditko, who was also very busy with Spider-Man and Dr. Strange, was overloaded too. Jack didn't do issue #6 and I know Steve was doing Dr. Strange and Spider-Man and Jack was doing virtually everything else… so that may have been why it was canceled. I had to stop something so we put the Hulk on hold for a while. He later came back in *Tales To Astonish*.

BOB: I'd like to name a series of early Marvel superheroes and get a response from you. The Amazing Spider-Man:

STAN: Our most famous character… Spider-Man was a surprise to me, I never thought he would be as successful as he was. It was just something I wanted to do. . wanted to get out of my system.

I've told this story often… I suggested to my publisher, Martin Goodman, that we create Spider Man but he didn't want to publish it. He said it was the worst idea he had ever heard. He said, "People hate spiders, you can't call a book Spider-Man."

Then when I said I wanted him to be a teenager he said teenagers can only be sidekicks, a teenager can't be a main character. Then when I told him I wanted Spider-Man to have all kinds of problems he said, "Don't you understand what a hero is? Heroes don't have sprained ankles and dandruff and acne and money troubles, and girl troubles!" Anyway, the debate went on and on… and he wouldn't give the OK for the book.

Then we decided to kill *Amazing Fantasy/Amazing Adult Fantasy*. When we decided to kill that book nobody cared what you put in the last issues… so I figured I'll get it out of

my system and I had Jack draw it first. He did a couple of pages, I said, "Jack, I don't want Spider-Man to look like Captain America. I don't want him to be a handsome, muscular guy, I want him to look like an ordinary kid—a little bit puny if anything."

But everything Jack drew was so heroic and wonderful and I think maybe he hadn't really been listening to me so he drew the first experimental pages of Spider-Man like a real hero… you know, big and strong looking.

Besides, Jack was busy on a million other things, so I gave it to Steve Ditko instead. Steve did it just the way I had always envisioned it. Steve's rendition was perfect and we did it as a 10 or 12 page story in *Amazing Fantasy*. I put Spider-Man on the cover of issue #15 and forgot about it.

Candid photo of Stan Lee and John Romita Sr. working on the Spider-Man newspaper strip in 1978.

Then the sales figures came in a couple of months later. I'll never forget Martin walking in and saying, "Remember that character of yours, that crazy idea that we both liked… Spider-Man. Why don't you do a series of it?"

So that was the whole story of Spider-Man. Never expected that it would turn into anything, I just wanted to do it… and get it out of my system.

BOB: The Mighty Thor?

STAN: We had the Hulk who was the strongest living human on earth and then we even had the Thing who was almost as strong. I wanted to do a new book and I said to Jack, "Who can we get that's even more impressive?"

I figured the only thing to do is get a god, there's nothing more impressive than a god. So Jack said, "Yeah, that sounds good." So I started to think—the Roman gods, the Greek gods, a lot had been done with them… we'd all seen Hercules and the others, but people don't know much about the Norse gods… including me. So I started looking them up and when I got to Thor I just thought, gee, a guy who is the god of thunder and lightning—that's impressive.

I told Jack about it and when I saw the way he drew Thor it was just wonderful… the outfit he gave him… the hammer, I wanted him to have that hammer, and I came up with a plot so he could.

Again, we never knew these things were going to turn out to be big important scripts and I didn't have time to write it, it was just going to be a 10 or 12 page story inside *Journey Into Mystery*.

So I asked my brother, Larry Leiber, to write the script. He wrote it and Jack drew it and again it turned out to be great (Larry did a good job too). When I saw we were going to continue it, that's when I started writing a lot of them.

Larry named the hammer the "Uru" hammer. I never had heard of "Uru" and I don't think Larry had either… most don't know he just made it up. I loved Thor because I loved writing dialogue that's a little different. I liked Thor being able to say, "thou shalt" and "so be it" and "wither goest thou" and that kind of stuff… and I especially liked the way I could have Odin talk. And it was fun writing for gods and goddesses… for Loki the evil god.

I enjoyed writing the irony into the stories… for example even though Loki was a villain, he was Odin's son… and Odin loved him… and Thor didn't want to break Odin's heart by letting Odin know how evil Loki really was. There was also irony in the idea of Dr. Don Blake, a lame doctor, hitting his cane to become Thor. I felt that Thor was more than just a trivial strip… there was a lot of depth there. Also it was easy to be imaginative when you're talking about great concepts like

Asgard and the rainbow bridge linking Asgard to Earth.

I think over the years the writers now have lost most of these elements for some reason and I think they've sort of forgotten about Don Blake and Thor. I'm a little surprised at that. If I were doing it now, I think I would do a Thor book, perhaps a little differently. But Thor's a great character and Jack did such a magnificent job on the strip.

I also really liked the great stories at the end of the book (which were later on called "Tales of Asgard")... most of those were dreamed up by Jack because he did a lot of research on Norse gods... more than I did. I loved working on that book with him.

BOB: The invincible Iron Man?

STAN: By the time I did that script I was getting pretty sure of myself... I began to think I could do anything. Everything we were putting out was selling well. I remember I had a talk with Martin, my publisher, and I said, "You know what would be fun? Let's get a character that wouldn't have a chance to be a success right now and let's make him popular."

The Viet-Nam War was on and most (not all) comic book readers seemed anti-war at that time. They were anti the military industrial complex and there were a lot of hippies then who hated big business... and they especially hated people who ran munitions factories and things like that.

So I thought let's get a guy like Howard Hughes—who makes weapons and munitions— he'll be a big industrialist and an ardent capitalist. Let's find a way to make someone like that popular.

Martin said, "You're crazy." But he didn't say no. By then, anything we did was working. So I really modeled Iron Man after Howard Hughes. You know... kind of an adventurer.

Howard Hughes used to fly his own plane and was an inventor and a billionaire. I liked giving all of our characters an Achilles heel of some sort. With Iron Man I thought I would give him shrapnel that was lodged near his heart... and he would never know when it would move a little and kill him.

Then I thought it would be ironic if Tony was one of the richest men in the world, and one of the handsomest—with women crazy about him—and yet he can't really enjoy it all that much because he's afraid of making a commitment because he may die at any time within 20 seconds.

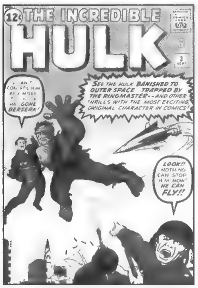
I like the idea of that kind of character. I was lucky it caught on

Above, Stan Lee interviews Bob Kane and Will Eisner (early 1990s).

Left, a rare WWII photo of a young Stan Lee "at the drawing board" during his stint with the Army Signal Corps (1942).

BOB: As the years went on, Marvel pioneered African-American superheroes. Was the Civil Rights Movement on your mind at the time?

STAN: I wasn't thinking of civil rights I was just thinking we ought to have some African-American heroes. I know I had a lot of friends who were black and we had artists who were black. So it occurred to me… why aren't there any


THE INCREDIBLE HULK
SEE THE HULK BANISHED TO OUTER SPACE TRAPPED BY THE RINGMASTER—AND OTHER THRILLS WITH THE MOST EXCITING ORIGINAL CHARACTER IN COMICS!

Strange Tales #79 (Dec 1960) and Hulk #3 (Sep 1962).

black heroes? Just like today I think there ought to be more Hispanic heroes, there ought to be some Scandinavian heroes, and Native-American heroes. I think we ought to play up all the possibilities.

THE WONDERFUL WASP TELLS A TALE
"WHEN
I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO THE VETERANS HOSPITAL, JAN, TO ENTERTAIN THE FELLAS WITH SOME FANTASY TALES!
STORY PLOT : STAN LEE
SCRIPT & ART : L. D. LIEBER
INKING : D. HECK
LETTERING : R. HOLLOWAY
X-541

At any rate, I loved the idea… I think the Black Panther was one of the first we did. I tried to put blacks in other stories too. We had the Falcon in Captain America. I had Robbie Robertson in Spider-Man as the editor—he was the smart one and J. Jonah Jameson was really the buffoon.

Anyway, I loved the way we did the Black Panther. I wanted him to be the king of his own country in Africa but not the typical kind of African king. I figured why not under the ground… a secret kingdom nobody knew about. And there, under the ground where it wouldn't show, would be the most highly industrialized, scientific country in the world… it's leader a master scientist… but nobody would know except the people in Wakanda.

I loved the concept and as usual Jack did a totally magnificent job. When he became the Black Panther, Jack would draw him like a human being but with poses that were always a little bit catlike, especially when he went into action or when he ran.

Jack had such a great facility with just a few lines to capture the absolute essence of what a character was supposed to be.

BOB: How did you make the creative leap from

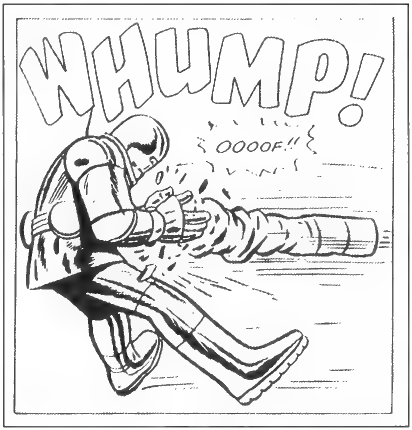
your work in the '40s and '50s to your innovative work at Marvel in the '60s?

STAN: It was on account of my wife… I'll explain. I really was very bored and tired of what I was doing. I thought the stuff we did in the '40s and '50s was good and it was varied… and I liked the variety, but I was getting bored.

A lot has been written about the Atlas years… and your readers probably know about the incredible number of genres we did. For instance back then I was doing teenage girl titles like *Millie the Model*, *Tessie the Typist*, *My Friend Irma*, *Georgie*, *Willie*, *Little Lenny*, *Hedy of Hollywood*. I was also doing the animated books… I wrote *Terrytoons*, *Silly Seal* and *Ziggy Pig*, *Crazy Comics*, and *Comedy Comics*.

Then there were the westerns, the *Two Gun Kid*, the *Rawhide Kid*, the *Texas Kid*, and *Kid Colt, Outlaw*. I had to check the titles with Martin my publisher and he loved the word "kid" so I threw that into almost every title. We had the *Montana Kid*, the *Nevada Kid*, the *Dakota Kid*. We could always get new titles as long as we didn't run out of states (*laughter*).

My favorite western was the *Black Rider* because he was like the first of the superheroes, he had the same formula. He was a peace-loving doctor in the west but when the occasion arose he put on this black mask, black suit, and black cape and he became the Black Rider, the two-gun wizard and went out and fought the outlaws, so he was like a superhero of the west. I liked Black Rider so much that on one cover we had a photograph instead of a drawing and I wore the outfit, I posed as the Black Rider with a mask over my face. I love that cover.



Anyway, we did westerns then we did war books. We had *War Comics*, *Battleground*, *Battle Comics*, *Combat Comics*, *Combat Casey*, *Combat Kelly*, *Bat O'Brady*. It seemed like thousands of titles. We did horror books… about 50 million horror magazines (*laughter*) and the there was the romance titles… we did a lot of those: *My Love*, *Love Romances*, *Romantic Love*… *Your Love*, *Her Love*, *Their Love*…(*laughter*).

I was writing most of this stuff and I enjoyed it. It was the variety…

But back to being bored… I said to myself none of this is making an impression on anybody. We were successful, we made money, but what bothered me was that we were following the trends in those days, not setting them.

Martin would merely check the sales figures of all the comic companies and he would see what was selling well and one day he'd say to me, "You know Stan, the western books seem to be selling really well, let's do a lot of westerns."

Months later, "The animated books are doing well," and then we'd switch to animated, then we'd switch to war, then

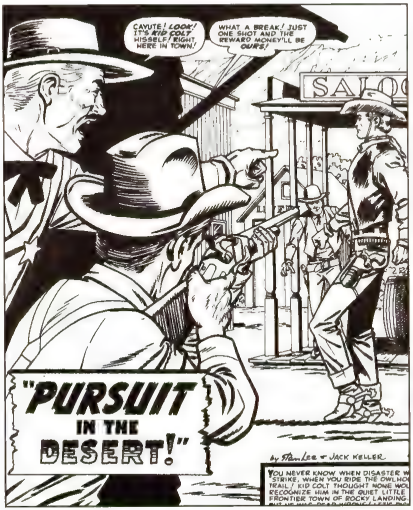
Even though Larry Lieber penciled "When Wakes the Colossus!", Don Heck's distinctive inks are instantly recognizable as one of Marvel's signature Silver Age styles.

we'd switch to horror. So we always were following whatever seemed to be selling.

Even though it was a good job and I enjoyed working with artists and the other writers and the editors… it really wasn't that fulfilling. I used to complain to Joan that Martin didn't really want to concentrate on characterization, he just felt the books are read by very young kids, just keep a lot of action and keep the dialogue short, make it simple for them to understand. That's what bothered me, there wasn't a chance to do any real writing or concentrate on the dialogue or concentrate on the characterization. So I said to my wife for a number of years, "I really would like to quit and do something else."

Then Martin came into me one day and he said, "You know I was playing golf with Jack Liebowitz and he told me he has this book, the *Justice League*, and it is selling very well. Why don't we put out a team of superheroes." So I said fine and then I went and I said, "Oh Joanie I'm not going to do the same old thing again, I'm really going to quit." So she said, "If you want to quit anyway why don't you do the book he wants but do it the way you'd like to do it and the worst that could happen is he'll fire you… and you want to quit anyway."

Marvel/Atlas artist Jack Keller, who partnered with Stan Lee for many memorable stories (e.g. "Pursuit in the Desert!" splash below), is rarely acknowledged or referenced by comic book historians.


CAVUTE! LOOK! IT'S KID COLT AND HIS SIDEKICK, RIGHT HERE IN TOWN!
WHAT A BREAK! JUST ONE SHOT AND THE SEWARD MONEY'LL BE OURS!
SALO
"PURSUIT IN THE DESERT!"
by Stan Lee & Jack Keller.
YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN DISASTER W STRIKE. WHEN YOU RIDE THE OWLHOO TRAIL, KID COLT THOUGHT NONE WOU RECOGNIZE HIM IN THE QUIET LITTLE FRONTIER TOWN OF ROCKY LANDING.

Stan Lee poses with Jim Galton in Manhattan during the1980s. Jim was president of Marvel at the time this shot was taken.

So it just happened it was the time he wanted to do a superhero book and I did the *Fantastic Four*… I tried to do it my way where the characters were maybe a little more three dimensional, they had their own little problems, and they didn't always get along well together, things like that. And it worked. So I was really incredibly lucky that everything came together at that point.

BOB: It must have been a wonderful time for you.

STAN: It was. Although it's like being in the middle of a hurricane… you don't have time to think about the success. There was so much going on then… and I always had to do the next issue and the next. Jack and I were enjoying what we were doing… and then we did the *Hulk* and then *Spider-Man*, and on and on. There was so much work that I didn't have time to sit back and think, "Gee, this is great." All I was doing was looking at the clock and calendar and saying, "I'm late, I'm late, I've got to get another story written." But it was really fun, I loved it.

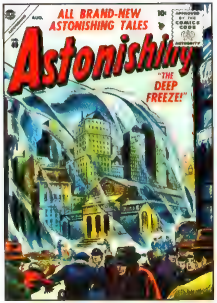
BOB: Moving a few years ahead… in 1968 Martin Goodman sold Marvel to the Perfect Film and Chemical Corporation. Was there much impact on you?

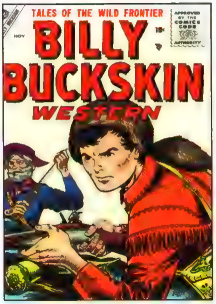
STAN: I can't remember that it had much effect… It didn't seem to matter who owned the company. I became the publisher for a while and I eventually became the president of the company. I hated being the president, because suddenly I was working on financial plans and was going to business meetings. I thought there was a million guys who could do that as well as I could.

BOB: That was the early '70s wasn't it?

STAN: Yes. I wasn't having enough time to concentrate on what I enjoy doing—the stories and also promoting Marvel. I loved traveling around and speaking at conventions and in colleges and talking up Marvel. So I walked away from being the president and they just gave me the title: publisher. To

(Continued on page 45)





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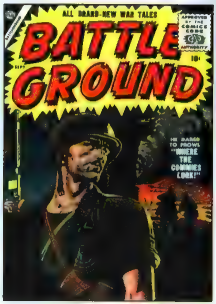

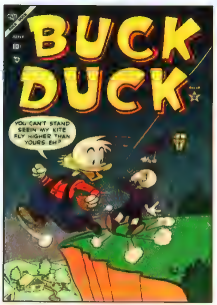

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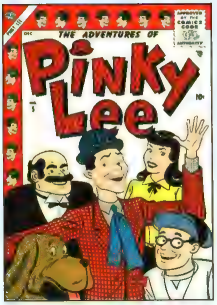
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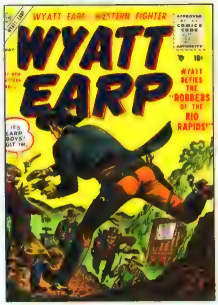
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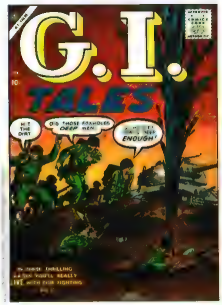
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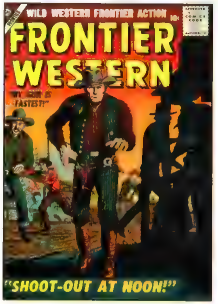
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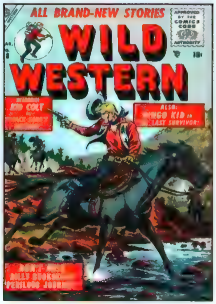
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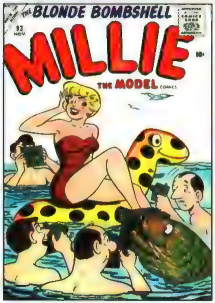
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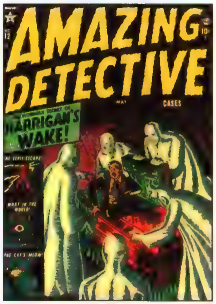
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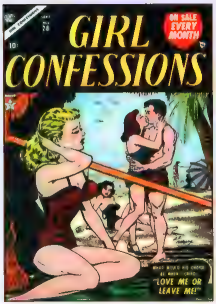

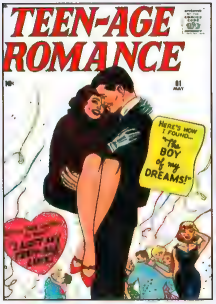

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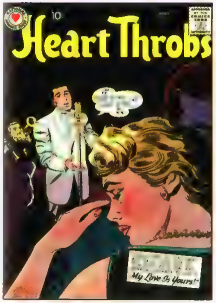
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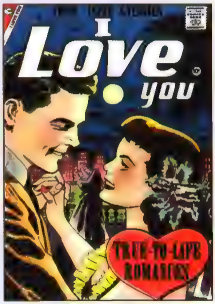
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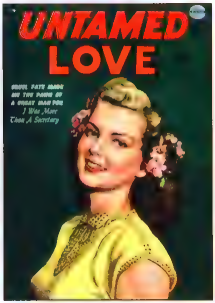
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SOUL FATE MADE ME THE PAWN OF A VICIOUS MAN FOR
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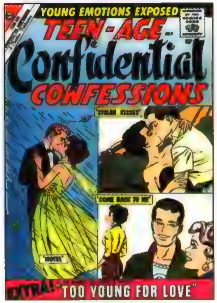
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HOPES
EXTRA!
TOO YOUNG FOR LOVE

Heart THROBS
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THERE GOES THAT NEW GIRL WITH RUTH'S BOYFRIEND! NOW!
OH, NELL! NOT YOU!
I WAS THE OTHER GIRL
NEVER LOVE A SOLDIER
Secrets Spoiled My Sweetheart!
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In this issue:
'HUSBAND HUNTER!'

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young Love
TRUE ROMANCE Confessions
APR-MAY 1956 No.70

this day I don't know what publisher really means because I don't really publish.

After Martin Goodman left, a few new fellows came in to replace him . . . but they only lasted a short time. Then Jim Galton joined the team and he was president for quite a few years. Jim was a great guy. We got along here beautifully and he knew what he was doing. He took care of the business and I took care of the creative part and everything was fine.

BOB: 1968 was a very significant year for Marvel... you launched Silver Surfer books, you launched *Spectacular Spider-Man*, first issues of magazines, but also books were canceled. Do you know why there was so much combustion in 1968?

STAN: I didn't usually make the decision to cancel books, that was usually made by whoever was running the business. They'd read the sales figures and say "well this book isn't selling well enough, let's cancel" it or something like that. The only time I was part of the decision was if I didn't feel we had enough artists to do the job right. I'd rather drop a book than do it badly.

BOB: I'd like to ask you about some of your Marvel colleagues... to start with, what do you remember most about Steve Ditko?

STAN: Steve is a little bit of an enigma to me. He is a very private person, I don't think he likes to be interviewed. (Unlike me!) He is incredibly talented and is a little bit like Ayn Rand—he's got definite convictions and he sticks with them and he's true to them. There is nothing I could say about Steve that wouldn't be totally positive and flattering. I'm a big fan of his. I don't think Spider-Man would have been as successful if he hadn't drawn it in those early years. I think he gave it so much of the look it needed and the quality it needed.

It's not common knowledge, but Steve's also a good story man. I didn't write out detailed scripts for him, I would just tell him (as I did with Jack) what I thought the story should be and he went home and drew it any way he wanted to . . . and the way he drew these things was fantastic.

It was very easy for me to write them because visually the stories were just so beautifully laid out and so clear and exciting. There is a very famous scene he did in a Spider-Man story where he was trapped in a subway tunnel and had to lift some heavy weight over his head. I just mentioned the idea but Steve drew it incredibly . . . devoting I think 3 or 4 pages to Spider-Man lifting those heavy weights. I hadn't thought of devoting that many pages to it, but it was a brilliant, brilliant move on Steve's part and made that episode absolutely unforgettable and as dramatic as anything could have been. I'm still Steve's biggest fan.

BOB: John Romita?

STAN: John is incredible. He can draw anything. . and he did—anytime. At first it was Jack . . . whatever I needed, Jack would draw it. I needed a fast cover. I needed a guy to fill in on a script, anything. When Jack left, John became Jack Kirby to me. Suddenly the guy who was doing Daredevil was late, I said, "John, Can you do this Daredevil script?" "Sure, I'll do it."

Early renditions of the Silver Surfer and the Fantastic Four are still considered by most collectors to be the quintessential images of Marvel's icon characters.

Gil Kane is usually acclaimed for his art on DC's Green Lantern and Atom... yet Kane has stated in interviews that he is proudest of his work on Marvel's Warlock.

he said and he did it beautifully. "John, can you do this cover?" "John, can you do Captain America?"

One thing about John... he took over the Spider-Man script when Steve left. John's style is totally different than Steve's but I told him I'd like it to look like Steve's in the beginning. The first script he did of Spider-Man you'd have thought Steve Ditko did it. He got so close and then little by little as the months went by he slowly brought it into his own style. But he did it so brilliantly that I think the readers weren't even aware of the transition.

The only problem with John, he's so good, I wanted to give him more books... but unfortunately for me, not for him, he's a perfectionist and he would not release a drawing unless he thought it was perfect.

STAN LEE PRESENTS
THE BEGINNING OF AN AWESOME NEW SAGA!
ROY THOMAS
GIL KANE
DAN ADKINS
SAM ROSEN
YEAH, NOW THE AWESOME UNLEASHED POWER OF THE BEING KNOWN ONLY AS
HIM!
AND MEN SHALL CALL HIM... WARLOCK!
NOW, LET THE MOVEMENT BEGIN...

A Lee/Kirby/Ayers classic... Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos was an improbable hit during the early years of the anti-war movement.

I used to say, "John, your worst drawing is better than most other guys' best drawing. Just do it, leave it alone and go on to the next one." But he wouldn't do it, he draw something and he'd fix it and he'd polish it... but it was worth it because everything he did was just magnificent. He's one of the best.

I was the luckiest guy in the world because I was working with only the best people. I'd like to say it was my doing because I was able to spot them but actually I just lucked into them somehow. I think we've had the greatest art staff that has ever been assembled in the history of the world. There was John Buscema, Gene Colan, Gil Kane, Ross Andru, Dick Ayers, Wally Wood (for a while), Bill Everett (for a while), Russ Heath... Don Heck who started Iron Man... Werner Roth who took over the X-Men for a while. There's so many more I haven't mentioned, the list goes on and on...

I consider myself the luckiest guy in the world because we couldn't do anything wrong with artists like that, and we had wonderful writers also. I didn't write everything. After a while it was more than I could handle.

BOB: Speaking of writers, what is your recollection of Roy Thomas?

STAN: Roy was one of the best. In fact, usually when I would drop a script I would ask Roy to do it and fill in for me, then when I became the publisher and I had to spend most of my time traveling around, I asked Roy to take over my job for me and he became the editor-in-chief. He did a wonderful job. Roy was like a John Romita in the writing area. Whatever I needed doing, he did. I owe Roy a lot because if not for him I wouldn't have been able to move away from the books the way I did.

SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS IN...
THE 7 DOOMED MEN!
THEY KNEW IT WAS A SUICIDE MISSION BUT NOT ONE OF THEM FALTERED!
SCRIPT: STAN LEE
PENCILS: JACK KIRBY
INKING: DICK AYERS
LETTERING: ART SIMEK

BOB: The recently deceased Archie Goodwin?

STAN: Another great guy. Like Roy he was a terrific writer and a wonderful editor. In fact, I had an idea for a book I wanted to do for a long time. I wanted to do something a little older and a little bit better, and I gave it to Archie to do. I came up with the name Epic. Remember *Heavy Metal*? I wanted a Marvel version of something like that. I gave it to Archie and he did a great job on it.

And of course he also did other books and stories for us. He was everything everybody said he was, he was a great guy to work with, easygoing… and incredibly competent at everything he did. Archie was very, very professional. I had been a fan of his when he worked for Jim Warren for the Warren horror magazines. I thought we were very lucky when we finally got him to come over to Marvel.

BOB: John Buscema?

STAN: Buscema was another of the greatest artists anybody could imagine… I mean the only word I can think of is perfect. He drew somewhat like a modern-day Michelangelo. His artwork was more realistic than probably any of the others and there was such power and beauty in his drawings and figures and he was also wonderful at stories too. All I had to do was give him the germ of what I wanted over the phone for 5 or 10 minutes… or write a couple of paragraphs and send them to him… and he would go and draw the whole thing and it would come out beautiful. I have nothing but the highest praise for John, I just wish the hell he hadn't retired because I miss his art.

Who was it… Archimedes who said, "Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough and I can move the Earth." I've often felt, "Give me Kirby, Romita and Buscema, and I can create masterpieces."

BOB: Jim Steranko?

STAN: I love them both and they are both such enormous talents. Jim was probably the most innovative of all our artists. But the thing I loved about Jim the most was he was a real stylist, he would never do anything just like other people did—he created his own style and his style was wonderful. The funny thing about Jim was that he always felt that he wasn't that good an artist and I guess from his point of view he wasn't. His anatomy wasn't always perfect and so forth, but he was a wonderful designer and he had a great sense of the dramatic. He just knew how to draw characters that appealed to the readers.

His characters, like Jim himself, had a lot of glamour. Jim was a very glamorous guy. He had a great personality and could have made a living as a performer because he was incredibly talented and charismatic, and that came across in his artwork.

Jim also wrote beautifully and I think it was a real loss to the comic book industry when he decided to sort of retire from doing scripts and magazines. His stuff was wonderful. When he did Shield—he gave it a whole new look and a whole new excitement. He did the same with Captain America. Whatever he touched seemed new and fresh and exciting.

BOB: And Marie Severin?

STAN: I love Marie Severin. I won't say she's one of the most underrated people in the business because the people who know her do not underrate her… but to the general public I don't think she's as well-known as she should be. She can do anything! She's a colorist, she's a penciler, she's an inker. Marie can do humor and adventure. Her humor is hardworking, and she can do serious things with a touch of that humor that gives stories such a great quality.

I can't even begin to remember all the scripts she's done. She was also a joy to work with because she was always good-natured, great sense of humor and just a very wonderful person.

BOB: Gene Colan?

STAN: Gene was one of my favorite people and he drew in a style that was very illustrious, almost photographic… and yet not photographic because he exaggerated everything. He exaggerated his layouts and whatever he did looked interesting.

I remember once he did a panel and it only showed a man's hand opening a door so you saw the hand at the doorknob and that was all—the hand reaching for the doorknob, and it was a fascinating panel. You could look at it for a half hour and enjoy looking at it. I recall say-

ing to the guys in the bull-pen, "Only Gene could draw holding a doorknob and make it look that interesting."

One time I gave Gene a Captain America story plot. I said I want to get a few scenes of Captain America or Steve Rogers just walking in the street and just soliloquizing… thinking to himself he feels a little bit like an acronym, a man out of time… here he is in the present yet he's a guy from the past and this was troubling him

TALES TO
ASTONISH
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
27
JAN
10¢
SAVE ME, SOMEBODY, SAVE ME!! DON'T LET THEM DRAG ME THERE! NOT—GASP!—INTO THE ANT HILL!!
LET ME TELL YOU, WHILE I STILL CAN, HOW IT HAPPENED... FOR IT WAS
"THE MAN IN THE ANT HILL!"

One of the Silver Age's most collectible key issues, Tales to Astonish #27 (Jan 1962) is avidly sought-after by both Marvel "pre-hero" collectors and Kirby collectors.

When Gene drew it he gave me three pages of Cap just walking in the street and I had to fill up the thought balloons with thoughts. I only meant a couple of panels, but again only Gene could have drawn three pages of a guy walking in the street! And they were interesting and fun to look at… each panel was different than the next. Gene was amazing!

Anything I ever gave him to do, I never had to worry about it… he did a great job on Dr. Strange and all on the scripts he did. Gene was one of the giants and still is as far as I'm concerned. The one thing that all these guys had in common… Colan, Kirby, Romita, Buscema, Gil Kane, Ross Andru, Steranko, Dick Ayers and on and on—they were all a pleasure to work with. They exhibited no temperament and they weren't prima donnas. They were dependable as hell and the work always came in on time… and whatever they did was fantastic.

The one thing that I cannot repeat enough is that Marvel was very successful and I know I've gotten a lot of credit for it… but there is no way I could have done it if it weren't for all the greatest artists that have ever been assembled in one place.

BOB: Jack Kirby?

STAN: When you talk about Kirby you really run out of superlatives. Jack was a writer as well as an artist (as many of the legends were). He was incredibly imaginative and he did his most important writing with his drawing. When I say that I mean if I gave Jack a very brief idea of what I wanted for a story, he would run with it.

I could say "Jack in this next story, I think I'd like to have Dr. Doom kidnap Sue Storm and bring her to Liberia, then the Fantastic Four have to go after her and in the end Dr. Doom may promise that he won't hurt Sue if they do something, and Reed says OK I agree, and the Thing would say how can you trust him, and Reed would say despite all of his faults Doom is a man of honor, he would never lie. "

I would discuss the idea with Jack like that and that was all I had to do. And then Jack would go home and he would draw the story and he would add a million elements that I hadn't told him about, so he was really writing in pictures and dreaming up ideas along the way.

And then when I did write the copy (the words, the dialogue and the captions) it was such a joy because all I had to do was look at the illustration that Jack had done and each picture gave me a thousand new ideas. Jack never did a dull panel. Every drawing of his contained an expression the characters' face that almost told me what kind of dialogue to write. Jack could get more drama into a few lines than any artist I knew. His imagination and the things he came up with were wonderful… and on top of all that, he was fast!

I don't how anybody could have been that good and that fast…. There was only one other artist I knew who was as fast as Jack, perhaps even a little faster… that was Joe Maneely. Unfortunately, Joe died at an early age. Joe was the closest thing to Jack, it's just unfortunate that he wasn't around long enough to do more work. Joe could draw. He would do a stick figure in pencil then he would take a pen or a brush and ink it and there was the whole beautiful drawing and you'd wonder, jeez… the man is really drawing in ink.

But back to Jack Kirby… when Jack drew, you had the feeling that Jack had the entire drawing in his mind and when he put the pencil on the paper he was just "tracing" what he

already had in his mind. Most artists would draw a circle for the head and a circle for the body and then they'd start filling it in, but Jack would just start with the head and he would draw it and every line was there right from the start. He didn't make little rough drawings first… it was the most eerie feeling watching him draw—you felt he was tracing what was already in his head. Jack Kirby… he was the most dependable artist in the world, he never missed a deadline. He never did a bad job… all his jobs were great.

It's hard to talk about Jack without sounding as if you're exaggerating because that's how good he was.

BOB: How did the creative process change for you when Jack left Marvel in 1970?

STAN: The process always remained the same, but I was working with different people. We had John Romita… we had John Buscema who was great… and we had all the other fellows that I've mentioned. Some of them weren't as fast as Jack, some weren't as imaginative as Jack. With some artists I had to give them a little more plot for them to take off with it… but they were all good at it. I loved working with them. Did I mention Gil Kane? He was wonderful too.

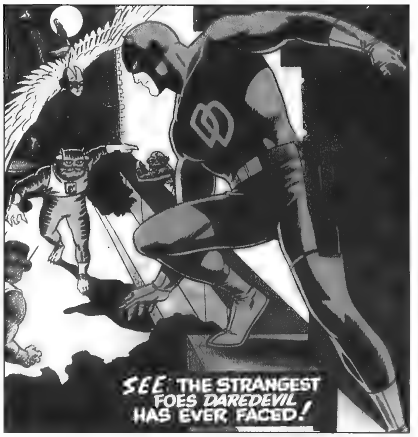
BOB: Speaking of Gil Kane, in the early '70s you published three Spider-Man issues without Comic Code's approval. How did that come about?

STAN: I had gotten a letter from the Office of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington and, as they are today, they were worried about young people taking drugs. They said with all the influence that Marvel Comics had they really thought it would be a great thing if we would do a story that illustrated the dangers of getting hooked on drugs.

Well, I don't like to do a story that sounds to preachy because that turns kids off, so I tried to introduce it in a story where it was just a sub-plot—it wasn't the main plot of the story. It was a simple little thing… to give the readers the feeling that taking drugs isn't the smartest thing to do. I had to run it over 3 issues and, as we always do, we submitted those 3 issues to the Comic Code office. They said we couldn't publish the issues… we couldn't get the CCA seal of approval because we're not allowed to mention drugs.

So I said, "Look, we're not telling our readers to take drugs for crying out loud." They said, "No, no, sorry you're not allowed to mention drugs." I said, "I was asked to do it by a branch of the United States Government… the Office of Health, Education and Welfare."

"Sorry, the Code is the Code." So I figured to heck with that, and I published the books anyway… without the Code seal. Funny thing is, we got more mail from parents, teachers, the HEW Dept., everybody praising us and saying how great these stories were. I think they then changed the Code and they allowed drugs to be mentioned if it was done in the right way



Then *The New York Times* wrote an article about the situation. They praised the issues very much and it was a very flattering article. Now when *The New York Times* writes a feature article it is usually picked up by smaller papers all around the country and reprints of that article in various forms started appearing everywhere… but each individual paper would give it its own headline. A lot of the headlines would say things like, 'Marvel Comics defies the Code with a drug issue' and if you didn't read the whole article it looked as though Marvel Comics was single-handedly trying to push drugs on the whole country. It was very funny the way that worked out. But you know it all turned out OK in the end.

BOB: In 1970 the company introduced Conan the Barbarian… How did you feel about sword and sorcery characters?

STAN: I enjoyed it but I wasn't a huge fan of Conan. I knew there had been a Conan the Barbarian, I think I may have read a story once but I wasn't really into it that much and it was really Roy Thomas who was the big Conan fan. Roy was

Top: Early Daredevil was one of Stan Lee's favorite costumed heroes. Above: A Stan Lee and Jack Kirby monster classic… Klagg!

the one who talked me into it. I think I reluctantly okayed it because I loved Roy and I hated to ever say no to him. I figured if the kid wants to do it, let him do it. I didn't think it would turn out to be so successful.

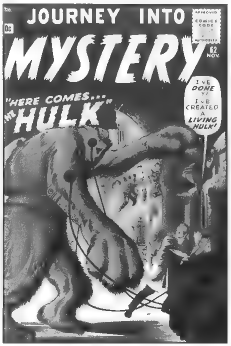
Roy did a great job on Conan and worked well with every artist that he ever had… there was so many who did it. There was Buscema, Barry Windsor Smith and others and they were all great, and the script was very successful. It was because of that script and the success of the *Conan* title that they did the *Conan* movie. Conan had been sort of a dead issue until Roy decided to put it in comics and he wrote it so well and edited it so well that it became a real sensation… so Roy Thomas really deserves the credit for Conan.

BOB: Do you recall the period in the early '70s when a lot of titles were introduced and then canceled?

STAN: I remember. It's not that the ideas weren't good but sometimes they weren't drawn in the style they should have been or maybe the writing wasn't great or maybe the ideas were ahead of their time or behind their time, you never can say. It was a period of a lot of experimentation and it was a lot of fun, and we were very lucky that Marvel was big enough and successful enough that it could afford to experiment. If the project didn't work, OK so be it so we'll try something else. We could afford to take chances and that's the most fun you can have in this business.

When you can experiment you can say, "Hey, wouldn't it be cool if there was a book like this… let's try it!" Ideas don't always work… sometimes they bomb… but at least you've had the fun of trying.

Journey Into Mystery #62 (Nov 1960) is considered a "prototype" of the Incredible Hulk. Some collectors consider Strange Tales #101 (Oct 1962) "Human Torch #1."



STRANGE TALES
12¢
101
Starring: the FABULOUS HUMAN TORCH!
EVEN THE HUMAN TORCH CAN'T SAVE ALL THOSE PLUMMIN, MEN AT ONCE!! AND SO, THE DESTROYER WINS AGAIN!
IF I SAVE THOSE MEN, THE DESTROYER WILL GO FREE! BUT I CAN'T LET THEM FALL! I CAN'T!

BOB: Do you remember the *Marvel Treasury Editions*?

STAN: Yes, yes. Those *Treasury Editions*… I always got a kick out of those because physically they were so totally different from the other books and I liked those. I liked everything we did. I used to joke about it—I was Marvel's greatest fan.

BOB: Were there story lines that stand out as favorites?

STAN: One that I liked very much was when we introduced Galactus and the Silver Surfer in Fantastic Four. As I mentioned, I sometimes lecture at colleges. Whenever we have a question and answer period, inevitably one of the kids in the audience would say, "Stan, tell us about the Galactus trilogy?" Somehow the expression "the Galactus trilogy" sounded so impressive to me like it was something more than just comic books… like the Harvard classics. The Galactus trilogy… that gave me a big kick.

I liked the Spider-Man anti-drug issues… I liked those three issues.

There was also a Thor story that I always remembered. Again it was at a time when being a hippie was such a popular thing and all the kids were following Hunter Thompson and Jack Kerouac and people like that… and many of them were saying we're going to drop out and to Hell with everything. I had Thor meet a bunch of kids somewhere and he starts lecturing them, except I tried not to do it in a true lecturing way. Thor says to them there's nothing wrong with criticizing the way things are or wanting to change them or make them better, but you can't do it by dropping out. If you want to make any meaningful change you've got to plunge in and you've got to do things. Of course I worded it better in the book than I'm saying now And I kind of liked that and I got a lot of mail about that.

Another one I liked was a Daredevil story called "Brother Take My Hand" or something like that. It was about a black veteran who comes back from the army and he has been blinded. Daredevil helps him at the end. I liked the relationship and I loved the dialogue.

There were others too.

BOB: Did you take the Silver Surfer out of the Bible and was there a certain religious aspect to the work?

STAN: People seem to think so, but basically all I was trying to do was let him espouse a lot of my own philosophies. There's nothing really biblical about it. I have always personally felt that all of us, every living being, gets one shot at life.

You know, we're here once then we're gone as far as we know, and why the hell not enjoy it as much as possible. Why not be nice to our fellow man. We're all in the same boat so to speak, we're all taking a journey to nowhere and why not make it as pleasant for all of us as we possibly can.

And I always have felt, we live in the most wonderful world where the Earth provides us with food, we have shelter, the weather changes, there is always variety, we all have things to do. Why not enjoy it? Why is there so much hatred and bigotry? Why do we hate people who seem to be different than we are instead of enjoying the variety?

You know little things like that that I myself feel, and here was a character that could say these things. It was so perfect for me... it was so easy to have him say the things that I would like to say because he was from another world. He had just arrived here on Earth and he was viewing mankind with fresh eyes, and he could react.

I've always thought "how would a person from another world react if he could see how stupid we are, and how we waste time fighting wars and argue with each other instead of just enjoying life." I was able to put my thoughts, pedestrian as they may be, in the mouth of the Silver Surfer, and I enjoyed doing it.

But when I would go to colleges to lecture, a lot of the students would ask if I purposely tried to make Silver Surfer like Jesus Christ because the character was always being hounded and hunted and persecuted by people. I didn't at all... that wasn't my idea... but I could understand later why some people would think he had a Christ-like attitude... especially when I brought in Mephisto, the devil. I always loved the character of Mephisto. That story we did with John Buscema I thought was one of our best.

Anyway, I loved the Surfer because I was able to be a little bit more philosophical. Maybe it was corny, but I enjoyed doing it. Silver Surfer was probably my favorite comic book series of all. They were all Buscema except the last one was Kirby.

But you know... I say one is my favorite then I think to myself, certainly the first hundred or so Fantastic Fours that I did was my favorite series, then I think Spider-Man was my favorite, and then I think gee I loved Thor and I loved Iron Man, so I guess I really can't say what my favorite is. Honestly, I liked them all.

BOB: Characters?

STAN: I loved them all. It's like a parent with all his kids.

I love Dr. Strange. You see I like characters who talk differently. I loved Asgard because I had the characters talking in this pseudo-biblical or Shakespearean-like dialogue. With Dr. Strange I had all those incantations.

It's funny, when I would lecture at schools inevitably somebody would get up from the audience and say "Stan, we've been talking about Dr. Strange's incantations and is it true that you got them from the something in history?" and I used to say "no... I made them up!" People always feel that you wrote something because of something else... or that you were influenced by literature. But very often you just dreamed it up and you weren't influenced by anything specific

The one thing I think I was influenced a little bit by with the Dr. Strange expressions was H. P. Lovecraft and the words he used to use. They'd always have a "th" in them at the end and so forth, but that was all.

I liked the Hulk. I liked the idea that it was a combination of the Frankenstein monster and Jekyll & Hyde. I sort of tried to put the two of them together.

I loved Nick Fury as *Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos* and I was very proud of the fact we wrote those war stories and people who liked war stories loved them. Sgt. Fury was very popular I'm personally not that crazy about war stories. . I'm not crazy about war... so after a few years I decided to drop the book. We had so much mail asking for it to come back. I didn't want to do new stories so I just reprinted the old issues and the reprints sold as well as the originals. I think we reprinted those almost like the reruns of *Seinfeld* on television. We reprinted those a lot and they kept selling.

With Fury, the thing I was proudest of was the dialogue. I had been in the army and I think they really talked like soldiers under battle conditions. But I never used any four-letter words which soldiers do use... yet somehow, even without using vulgar language, I think we were still able to get the idea across that these guys are really talking like enlisted men

A little known story about Fury is the reason I originally put out that book. As I mentioned to you earlier I was getting very confident because everything was selling well. One day I had this discussion with Martin and he said, "You know Stan,

Originally conceived as an experiment to challenge social convention, Iron Man debuted in Tales of Suspense #39 (Mar 1963).

I gotta admit one thing. You're real good at titles."

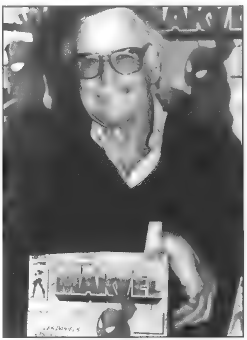
I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well I think obviously the reason these books are selling so well is because you came up with good titles like *Spider-Man* and the *Hulk* and the *Fantastic Four*. (That comment made me laugh because he had hated the title *Spider-Man*) Anyway, I said, "Martin, those are just ordinary titles. Anybody could have come up with those. I think the reason the books are selling is they are being written and drawn in a somewhat different style than the competition."

And he said, "No, it's not that, it's the titles." So I was determined to prove to him that he was wrong, so I said, "I tell you what. How about I come up with a title that will be the worst title you could ever get for a comic book, and not only that, fill it with the worst stories… the kind people will hate?" I said, "How about a book of war stories?"

Stan at the premiere of the hardcover history, **Marvel... Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics** by Les Daniels.

This was in the early '60s when kids were turned off on war. He said, "Nobody's going to buy a war book." I said, "OK, that's point number one. Point number two: Let's call it *Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos*?" Martin said, "Are you joking? That's the worst title… " I said, "I'll bet I could do that book and make it sell."

Well, we were so successful then that he didn't mind losing a few bucks to win an argument so he said go ahead and try it… but you're crazy.



So we did the title… what I tried to concentrate on was getting a platoon of soldiers that the readers would care about, and I think it was the one of the first multi-ethnic comic books ever done. We had Izzy Cohen, we had Dino Minelli, we had a Jew, and Italian, a black guy and a Scandinavian guy and on and on. Old Nick Fury was the toughest son-of-a-bitch around and the book sold.

It was so popular that when I finally killed it years later, we used to get a lot of mail. Those stories took place in W.W.II the letters would say, what's Sgt. Fury doing today, is he still alive? and that's why I later brought out *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* I did that for two reasons… first to bring him back again and second, there was a series on television called *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and it was very popular so I made up the acronym S.H.I.E.L.D.… Supreme Headquarters International Espionage Law Enforcement Division, something like U.N.C.L.E. and I'll bring back Fury and let him be a colonel now and be the head of S.H.I.E.L.D..

It'll make it seem realistic… like there really was a Sgt. Fury and now he's a colonel and now he's in charge of this big organization. It seemed to make Fury believable so we did it. S.H.I.E L.D. became pretty popular.

In fact, by the time this has been published the *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* movie will have aired on the Fox network… starring David Hasselhoff.

BOB: I've always had a personal hunch that Reed Richards was a favorite of yours.

STAN: I enjoyed writing him because I enjoyed the idea of a hero who (at least I hope this is the way he came across) was a little bit stuffy, concentrating a little bit too much on the scientific work he was doing and the big words he'd use. Reed was a very intense guy, that's how I saw him. I had fun making fun of him through other characters… the Thing would say (Stan imitates the low, gutteral voice of the Thing) "Can't he ever just talk plain English?" and things like that (*laughter*).

I know up to that time there hadn't been any heroes like Reed Richards. He was very bright but he was very self-absorbed and he wasn't quite the gung-ho guy that most of the other superheroes were.

BOB: Reed had a lot of moral integrity…

STAN: Oh yes… total moral integrity. I always thought of Dr. Doom as having a lot integrity too, but I think a lot of that has been lost over the years. I always thought of Doom as a man of honor and integrity and the only thing about him was… he wanted to rule the world. I used to joke about that. They used to say the beauty of Dr. Doom was that he really wasn't breaking any laws. You could walk up to a cop on the street and tap him on the shoulder and say, "Officer, I want to rule the world," and he can't arrest you because that's not a crime. I mean if you're able to do it, go rule the world.

BOB: Especially since you added the nice touch of giving Dr. Doom diplomatic immunity.

STAN: Yeah, I loved that too.

BOB: Where did that idea come from?

STAN: I just thought it would be funny to make him the

king of a country. That way he can address the U.N. or he can park illegally and you can't arrest him.

Again, if there was any formula that I tried to use, I could sum it up in one sentence: Make fantasy as realistic as possible. There could never be a character like Dr. Doom—some nut who walks around in armor with a corny name like that… but then you say to yourself suppose there were a character like that, how would he act, how would he be, what would he do?

And that's the fun of it, taking these improbable characters and trying to put them in a probable world. To me, it's the mix that becomes interesting.

BOB: Moving into the present tense, a number of fans whom I spoke with are curious about your recent writing projects.

STAN: I have been working mainly on our movie, television, and animation projects since I've been out here on the West Coast. I look at the comic books of course. I don't have time to really read them the way I should, but I look through them and I call the guys in New York every so often and butt in and give a suggestion here and there… which they may or may not pay any attention to.

I did one book recently. They asked me to do a Spider-Man/Kingpin story which John Romita drew… it was very exciting, and it just recently went on sale. They've also asked me to do a crossover about the Hulk vs. Superman which I'll be writing soon. I don't have time to do a series but I write a lot of introductions.

I'm doing a lot of work on the Marvel website now and I have a regular column there.

Oh… and Romita and I are planning to do a brand new original script on the website called "The Femizons" so John is working on that now and as soon as he gets the initial drawings completed, I'll begin writing it.

BOB: I remember the Femizons…

STAN: You remember them? We did the one story "Savage Tales" and I always planned to make a movie of that for a TV series. I'm still going to try to.

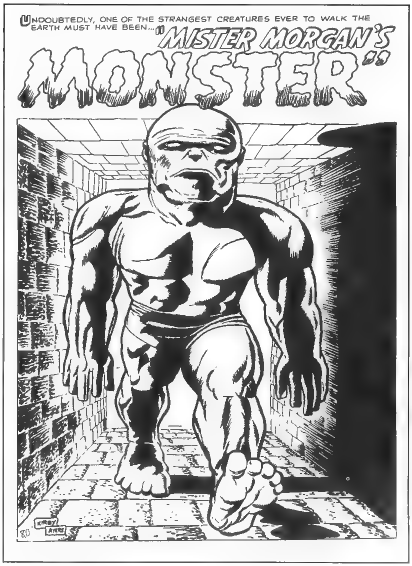
You are probably the only human being on Earth who remembers them. Anyway, I thought we would try to use the characters and put them on the web.

I enjoy working on the movie and TV projects but I love working on the animation!

I miss the comics but I really don't want to move back to New York… and that's where the comics are. I wish the whole damn comic department would move out to LA then I could do everything (*laughter*).

Another thing I'm doing, I've sold a motion picture script to 20th Century Fox which we are in the process of rewriting. You know you always do a first draft then you do a second draft so I'm in the process of doing a second draft. I have four TV series that are being developed now in various places so I've got my fingers crossed for those… they are some new original things. This is apart from Marvel.

I'm also trying to do some TV and movie work on my own and then if those things prove to be popular and successful I will try to bring them into Marvel and make them Marvel features



Kirby and Ayers' classic monster splash pages like "Mister Morgan's Monster" were the reason so many young readers flocked to the newsstand in search of Strange Tales, Journey Into Mystery, Tales of Suspense, and Tales to Astonish.

BOB: You mentioned four TV shows that are in production. Are these TV shows based on Marvel characters?

STAN: No, these are originals, but we hope to have a lot shows based on Marvel characters as soon as we get this bankruptcy thing taken care of. The way it looks now, Toy Biz will be taking over the company and Avi Arad handles virtually all of our movie, television and animation work. He is so good at TV that I'm sure the minute he is back here in control we are really going to start moving at a very fast clip to get a lot of our characters on TV.

In fact, just yesterday I was over at the Marvel restaurant and they had a press gathering for the *Nick Fury Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* movie with David Hasselhoff. He presented the

cast to the press and they showed the movie in the restaurant. It was real nice.

As you know we did *Generation X* and there's always a chance that we may be doing more of those. Now that we have the first *Nick Fury Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D* film, I have a feeling that maybe we'll do one or two more of those. Also we are going to start developing TV shows for many of our characters.

The Amazing Spider-Man is considered Stan Lee's most brilliant creation primarily because of the character's imperfections and average physique.

BOB: What is your movie about?
STAN: It's called *Tomorrow*, and it's about 30 years into the future. Of course I can't tell you anymore now except I think it'll be a good movie

BOB: Is Jim Cameron still doing the Spider-Man movie?
STAN: I don't know… I wish I knew. I know that Jim wants to do it. He has wanted to do it for I don't know how many years. When I first met Jim many years ago, he said, "You know Stan, I've been a fan of Spider-Man since I was 14. I'd love to do that movie."

Jim did a treatment which I've read. A big treatment, 60 pages long and it is wonderful. The beautiful thing about it, he didn't change any thing… it's the Spider-Man we've all known. . yet every page you read is fresh and new and different. I mean Jim is a genius, I'm as impressed with him as I was with Jack Kirby. and that's saying something!

At any rate, he wants to do it but the character is tied up in litigation. Some years ago, Cannon Films had the right to do the movie. They didn't do it but while they had the rights they presold the rights to other companies to do the videos, to do the distribution. and to do who knows what

I'm not a legal expert, but now those other companies are claiming they have the rights to the movie, and we are trying to untangle those rights. We can't go ahead until our lawyers free us from all these other entanglements. Now I think we're getting very close and I think once we get out of this bankruptcy and once Toy Biz takes over I think everything will be set. I'm confident Toy Biz will find a way to settle, so when that happens I will hope Jim has not committed himself to do five more movies which will take another 20 years. I think he's trying to wait to do the *Spider-Man* movie and as far as I know he still wants to do it. I've got my fingers crossed.

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
3
JULY
AMERICA'S MOST EXCITING SUPER-HERO CAPTURED BY THE WORLD'S MOST DREADED SUPER-VILLAIN!
YOU ARE HELPLESS, SPIDER-MAN! I WARNED YOU THAT THE POWER OF DOCTOR OCTOPUS IS FAR GREATER THAN YOURS!
A BOOK-LENGTH SUPER-THRILLER! SPIDER-MAN FACES HIS MOST POWERFUL FOE: DR. OCTOPUS!

These "everyday man" characteristics captured the hearts and minds of millions of pre-teens and teenagers around the world.

SPIDER-MAN
STORY: STAN LEE • ART: STEVE DITKO • LETTERING: SONNY DIX
FREAK!
PUBLIC MENACE!
SURE, YOU'VE READ MANY STORIES ABOUT MANY DO-GOOD HEROES, BUT HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A STORY LIKE THIS ONE— BECAUSE THERE'S NEVER BEEN A HERO LIKE SPIDER-MAN!

BOB: It was a pleasure speaking with you Stan, thanks for taking the time out of your busy schedule to chat with *CBM* readers.
STAN: It was my pleasure… thanks.

BOB: And congratulations on being the recipient of the CBM Life achievement award for 1998.
STAN: It's an honor…

ABOVE Strange Tales Annual #2 (Jul 1963, their 4th meeting) and Strange Tales #115 (Dec 1963, their 6th meeting). PAGE 56: Spidey and Torch meet at the Statue of Liberty for the first time in Strange Tales Annual #2. PAGE 57: The last panel from the same issue marks the beginning of a marvel-ous friendship as Spidey & Torch wrap up their first case.

Stan Lee's Fantastic Four was patterned after a "typical" American family…but they were as dedicated to protecting humanity as they were to each other. Young readers were familiar with the basic character types: Reed and Sue were the parental figures, while Johnny and Ben were the squabbling siblings. Although Sue and Johnny were brother and sister in the series, Of them all, Johnny's personality was the most in line with his powers. As a brash, hot-rodder with an arrogant streak, he was clearly a "hot-head" in more ways than one. He was, in Stan's eyes, a "typical" American teenager.

One year later, Stan flipped the coin and introduced the Amazing Spider-Man, an outgoing hero with a penchant for turning a witty phrase while bashing bad guys—another teenaged hell-raiser, except this persona was a mask, hiding a shy but brilliant young man named Peter Parker. Having shown us the kind of young boy everyone expected with Johnny Storm, Stan then made a nerd into a hero, tapping into the fears and fantasies of all children.

It was inevitable then that these two symbols of American youth would meet, but how would they react to one another? Badly, as it turns out. They were costumed heroes, both blessed with extraordinary powers, both believed to fighting injustice and protecting mankind, and yet both self-centered boys, with all their insecurities intact. They had more in common than most people ever do, and yet whenever they met, sparks flew. Perhaps it was the

A MARVEL-OUS FRIENDSHIP:
The Strange Tales of Spider-Man and the Human Torch

ALL RIGHT, BIG MOUTH…YOU ASKED FOR IT! WHEN I'M THROUGH WITH YOU, THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH OF YOU LEFT TO SMACK A SPIDER AT! I'M THOROUGHLY ENJOYIN' YOU WITH KID GLOVES!
HE'S COMING AFTER ME IT'S WHAT I WANTED!
NOW, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FIND A WAY TO LIVE THROUGH IT!

by Arnold T. Blumberg

much like looking into a mirror, or maybe they subconsciously threatened each other's territory, but whatever the underlying reasons, they were invariable at odds with each other.

As Stan's youngest "sons" matured along with the rest of the Marvel Universe, their sibling-like rivalry altered, and they gradually became first grudging colleagues, then friends. It was a fascinating relationship between two heroes, one that grew almost in real time. For kids who started reading Marvel Comics in the '60s and '70s, the partnership of Spidey and the Torch grew up with them, and the familiarity of the situation brought young readers that much closer to the adventures they loved to read.

Enemies by Nature (1963-1965)

Spider-Man's earliest encounters with the Torch were characterized by bitterness and jealousy. Johnny's perceptions of Spidey were warped by the Daily Bugle editorials on the wall-crawler, and thanks to his overblown ego, the Torch saw Spider-Man not only as the "menace" J. Jonah Jameson proclaimed he was, but as a dangerous rival for the spotlight.

They meet briefly in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1, when Spidey tries to join the Fantastic Four, and *Amazing Spider-Man* #3, during which the Torch unknowingly inspires Peter Parker to persevere in his second battle with Doctor Octopus. In these brief encounters, Spider-Man looks up to the Torch as the type of hero he aspires to be. That opinion would change drastically by the time of their first adventure together.

Strange Tales Annual #2 features the first team-up between the Torch and Spider-Man, as well as their first rendezvous at the Statue of Liberty, and set the standard for future stories. When Spidey is framed by the Fox, he looks forward to working with an established hero like the Torch—"He's a teenager, like me! It might be fun to work with him while we go after the guy who framed me!" Unfortunately, the Torch has a different view of the wall-crawler—"What can he do that I can't do better? I'd give anything for a chance to prove he ain't so hot!"—and when Spidey attempts to enlist Johnny's aid, the result is a classic Marvel fight, the first of many for the two headed duo.

SPIDER-MAN AND THE HUMAN TORCH LET'S WORK TOGETHER
A GUY WHO CALLS HIMSELF SPIDER-MAN!
BUT OTHER THAN ALSO...
WOW! WHAT A SHOWMAN THAT GUY IS!
SPIDER-MAN
THE HUMAN TORCH
HEY, TORCH! I HAD A MONSTER OF AN ALIBI FIGURED OUT, BUT NOW YOU'VE GOTTA COME WITH ME!
DON'T YOU WISH!
WATCH! I PRACTICALLY DOPED OUT THE WHOLE THING—I'M A LITTLE HELP FROM INSPECTOR BLUTH! THE CROOK HE HIRED TO STEAL THE PLANS FOR THE ROCKET—ALTHE BOMB—I RECOGNIZE HIS M.O. PHOTOS OF HIM—
OHMIGOD, IT'S STILL STEAMING!
THAT'S WHY WHEN I GOT HERE, I WAS WONDERING WHERE THE HECK PARKER WAS!
HEY, GUYS! COME ON AND WE'LL LISTEN TO YOU BOTH! I'M SURE WE CAN SETTLE THIS!
OH, NO YOU DON'T! I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU GET AWAY!

There was still plenty of feuding left in the pair, however. In what might be the definitive Spidey-Torch battle, Johnny confronts Peter when he believes him to be dating Doris. Parker stands up to him in public, to the surprise of his "friends," and then decides to push it further by pursuing Doris as Spider-Man. He arrives just as the Beetle is about to kidnap her, and when the Torch finds web remnants at Dorrie's house, he concludes that Spidey is the culprit, sparking a battle that rages throughout the city. Eventually the real enemy is revealed and apprehended, but as they wrap the Beetle up for the authorities, Johnny tells Dorrie that "sometimes I think he's really a terrific guy… and other times I wanna knock his block off!" "Even me, who isn't sure about me," Peter says glumly. "The Torch, who's no better than I in any respect, gets all the glory… the praise… and even the girl! It's a lousy life is one big happy ending!"

Colleagues by Necessity (1966-71)

As times (and artists) change, so does the behavior of Spidey and the Torch. John Romita's more romanticized Spidey is also more mature and less isolated, and soon he and the Torch seem less like rivals and more like two friends who are growing to respect and admire each other but have too much ego to admit it. This change is evident in "The Web and the Flame," in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #4. When asked to star in a film, Spidey prompts them to shake hands by saying "why don't we grow up and call it a truce?" The film is a trap concocted by the Wizard and Mysterio, and the two heroes still wind up fighting (once again due to a misunderstanding), but all ends well, and when Spider-Man prepares to leave, the Torch calls him back. "I wanna give you your share of the reward for our nabbing those two clowns," he exclaims. Spidey replies, "y'know somethin', hot-head? I think you're beginning to grow on me," perhaps regretting the time he accused the Torch of being a glory-hog.

Stan's two hot-headed boys were growing up, and even though they still fought, as in *Amazing Spider-Man* #14, in which the Torch unwittingly interferes in a battle between Spidey and the Lizard, they were becoming friends without even realizing it. Johnny's changing opinion of Spider-Man also affected the Fantastic Four as a whole. Reed and company now saw Spider-Man not as a potential menace, but accepted him as a worthy colleague. On several occasions, including *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #5, they even aided him by providing assistance during his adventures, and Spidey would often help the Thing in issues of *Marvel Two-In-One*.

Friends by Choice (1972-Present)

The debut of Marvel Team-Up introduced a new wrinkle in the ever-growing mythos of Spider-Man. Now, the webbed one would regularly team up with, apparently, every other living being in the Marvel Universe on a rotating basis, ruining our hero's chances of ever having a nap. Naturally, Johnny Storm would turn up in this new venue, and the series launched with Spidey and the Torch fighting side-by-side in *Marvel Team-Up* #1-3. By *MTU* #10, they even sit down to coffee together!

The final major turning point in their friendship, when it became clear that they chose to seek out each other's company as friends and not just colleagues, was in Spider-Mobile subplot that ran through *Amazing Spider-Man* #126, #127, and #130 (See *CBM* #4). This storyline spotlighted Peter and Johnny working together to build and test the car, just like any two buddies hanging around the garage and tinkering away. Time may have moved slowly in comics, but it surely hasn't stopped these two characters from maturing since their first encounter.

Even their traditional rivalry, like the Torch's issue of Liberty, would take on additional significance, serving as the catalyst for a plot by the Frightful Four to get revenge on the FF and Spidey by luring Spider-Man with a false distress signal in *Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man* #42. The crossover concluded in *FF* #218, with the group of heroes engaging in what the Thing sarcastically referred to as a "mutual admiration society." Obviously, a lot had changed since that first meeting so many years ago.

And the legacy continues. As recently as the "Identity Crisis" story arc that ran in the *Spider-Man* titles this Spring, in which Spidey has taken on a variety of new costumed guises to avoid the law, the Torch confronts what he believes to be a new crime-fighter, "The Hornet," and threatens him with revenge should he do anything to his "pal Spidey." Parker, under the Hornet mask, is touched by Johnny's display of friendship. In the post-Heroes Return *Fantastic Four* #9, on sale in July 1998, Spider-Man guest-stars with the human Torch in what is being billed as a "classic Marvel Team-Up reunion."

Starting as cocky young rivals, each more concerned with their own ego and image, the Torch and Spider-Man have become partners and friends, preserving their trademark verbal sparring only for show. Beneath it all is a mutual respect and admiration, not only for their individual abilities, but for their shared sense of justice and morality. Spider-Man may be the outcast and the Torch the media star, but in their hearts they know they are both heroes. When push comes to shove, the web-head and the match-stick will always be there for each other… except maybe to build another Spider-Mobile.

YOU WERE SOME HELP, TORCH! I NEEDED YOU LIKE A HOLE IN THE HEAD!
IN YOUR CASE, KIDDO, A HOLE IN THE HEAD WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT!
C'MON, LOCK ME UP SO I CAN STOP LISTENIN' TO YOU TWO NUTS!
FOR ANOTHER BRIEF ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE TORCH AND SPIDER-MAN, DON'T MISS THE FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL — ON SALE NOW!

CBM SILVER AGE CHECKLIST

Spider-Man meets the Human Torch

(Including GD, FN, & NM values per Overstreet #28)

Amazing Spider-Man #1 (Mar 1963) "Spider-Man Versus the Chameleon"; first meeting with the FF ($700; $2,100, $19,000)

Fantastic Four Ann. #1 (Mar 1963) "The Fabulous Fantastic Four Meet Spider-Man"; Retells Amazing Spider-Man #1 story) Amazing Spider-Man #3 (May 1963) "Spider-Man Versus Doctor Octopus"; Torch cameo ($154, $461, $2,000)

Strange Tales Ann. #2 (Jul 1963) "Human Torch, On the Trail of the Amazing Spider-Man!", 1st team-up/1st meeting at Statue of Liberty ($40; $120; $470)

Amazing Spider-Man #5 (Oct 1963) "Marked for Destruction by Dr Doom" ($120; $360; $1,450)

Strange Tales #115 (Dec 1963) "The Sandman Strikes"; early x-over with Sandman ($40, $120, $460)

Fantastic Four #21 (Dec 1963) "The Hate-Monger"; Spidey on Torch's dartboard ($21, $63, $210)

Amazing Spider-Man #8 (Jan 1964) "Spider-Man Tackles the Torch" ($66, $198, $790)

Amazing Spider-Man Ann. #1 (Jan 1964) "The Sinister Six" ($50, $150, $600)

Strange Tales #119 (Apr 1964) Spidey cam ($11, $34, $115)

Amazing Spider-Man #17 (Oct 1964) "The Return of the Green Goblin"; Part I ($47, $141; $570)

Amazing Spider-Man #18 (Nov 1964) "The End of Spider-Man"; Part II; 2nd meeting at Stat of Liberty ($33, $100, $370)

Amazing Spider-Man #19 (Dec 1964) "Spidey Strikes Back"; Part III ($30, $90, $300)

Amazing Spider-Man #21 (Feb 1965) "Where Flies the Beetle"; 2nd app Beetle since Strange Tales #123 ($24, $72; $240)

Fantastic Four #35 (Feb 1965) "Calamity on the Campus"; Parker cameo ($9; $27, $90)

Fantastic Four #36 (Mar 1965) "The Frightful Four", Spidey steals party cake ($9; $27; $90)

Amazing Spider-Man #40 (Sep 1965) "Spidey Saves the Day", Torch cameo in flashback ($29, $87; $290)

Fantastic Four #61 (Apr 1967) "Where Stalks the Sandman?"; Parker cameo ($4 20, $12.60, $42)

Amazing Spider-Man Ann. #4 (Nov 1967) "The Web and the Flame"; Vs. Wizard and Mysterio ($8.50, $25 50, $85)

Fantastic Four #73 (Apr 1968) "The Flames of Battle", with Daredevil and Thor ($3.50; $10 50, $35)

Amazing Spider-Man Ann. #5 (Nov 1968) "The Parents of Peter Parker" ($8, $24, $80)

Amazing Spider-Man #76 (Sep 1969) "The Lizard Lives"; Part I ($3 60; $10 80, $36)

Amazing Spider-Man #77 (Oct 1969) "In the Blaze of Battle", Part II ($3 60, $10 80; $36)

Amazing Spider-Man Ann. #6 (Nov 1969) reprints ASM #8, ASM Ann. #1, and Fantastic Four Ann. #1 ($3, $9, $30)

FIG. 4: CHARLTON BOOKS THAT AT LEAST DOUBLED IN PRICE 1997-98

Charlton 400-700% Increases

Change in Price 1-Year (97-98) %Δ	$Δ	5-Year (93-98) %Δ	$Δ		Prices 1993	1997	1998	Notes
Love and Romance								
400%	12.00	400%	12.00	1	3.00	3.00	15.00	
700%	7.00	700%	7.00	2-10	1.00	1.00	8.00	Restructure
400%	4.00	400%	4.00	11-24	1.00	1.00	5.00	
Just Married								
100%	15.00	200%	20.00	2	10.00	15.00	30.00	
122%	11.00	186%	13.00	3-10	7.00	9.00	20.00	
167%	7.50	200%	8.00	11-30	4.00	4.50	12.00	
350%	7.00	350%	7.00	31-50	2.00	2.00	9.00	
600%	6.00	600%	6.00	51-70	1.00	1.00	7.00	Restructure
400%	4.00	400%	4.00	71-90	1.00	1.00	5.00	Restructure
300%	3.00	300%	3.00	91-114	1.00	1.00	4.00	
I Love You								
213%	34.00	456%	41.00	17	9.00	16.00	50.00	68 pp giant
100%	6.00	200%	8.00	51-59	4.00	6.00	12.00	
100%	4.00	167%	5.00	61-85	3.00	4.00	8.00	
400%	4.80	500%	5.00	86-110	1.00	1.20	6.00	Restructure
233%	2.80	300%	3.00	111-130	1.00	1.20	4.00	
Love Diary								
100%	6.00	300%	9.00	21-40	3.00	6.00	12.00	
129%	4.50	300%	6.00	41-60	2.00	3.50	8.00	
400%	4.00	400%	4.00	61-102	1.00	1.00	5.00	
Teen Confessions								
400%	4.00	400%	4.00	56-58; 60-97	1.00	1.00	5.00	
Teen-Age Love								
100%	6.00	140%	7.00	21-35	5.00	6.00	12.00	
200%	6.00	350%	7.00	36-70	2.00	3.00	9.00	
400%	4.80	500%	5.00	71-96	1.00	1.20	6.00	

Charlton 100-399% Increases

	Issues
First Kiss	2-40
My Only Love	1-3
Secrets of Love and Marriage	7-25
Summer Love	48
Teen Secret Diary	1
Three Nurses	18-23
Time for Love	1-47; 53
Cynthia Doyle, Nurse in Love	66-74
Sweethearts	81-137
Sweetheart Diary	61-65
Romantic Secrets	21-35; 36-52
Romantic Story	81-130

Bottom left shows what a phenomenon romance comics were in the Atom Age. In 1949, the explosion came with the introduction of an incredible 123 new titles in one year! While there was a lot of fallout beginning the very next year, the genre ran through the mid-1970s. The beginning of the end was signaled when Young Romance died in 1975 after 28 wonderful years. By the end of 1980, there was not a single romance comic being published, for the first time since 1947.

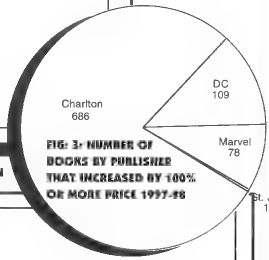


FIG. 3: NUMBER OF BOOKS BY PUBLISHER THAT INCREASED BY 100% OR MORE PRICE 1997-98

FIG. 8a: INTRODUCED AND DISCONTINUED EACH YEAR

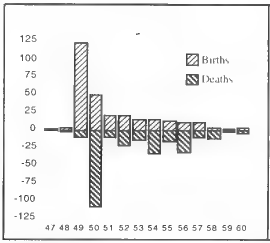
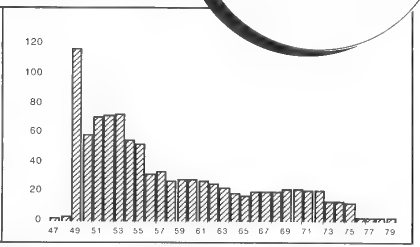


FIG. 8b: ROMANCE COMICS IN PRINT AT YEAR END



Investing in . . . Romance?

The new 1998 Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide reveals that romance is one of the hottest areas for investment right now. While the *Guide*'s market commentary makes some general comments about romance books selling very well, the real news is buried in the details of the pricing tables. What you find there is that the prices on 874 romance books increased by 100% or more, including 14 books that jumped 3,000-7,000%! If you had had the intuition to buy this portfolio of top-performing romance books in 1997 at *Guide*, you would have paid $2,946. At the new 1998 *Guide* levels, they are now worth $10,271. . . which is a one-year return of almost 250%!

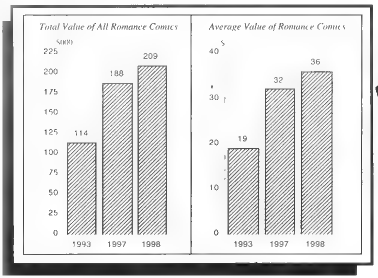


FIG. 1: 1- and 5-YEAR PRICE INCREASES FOR ROMANCE COMICS
The 5,800 or so comics that make up the 1947-80 romance genre can still be bought for a total of a little over $200,000 which is an average of only $36 per book.

Investing in Romance?

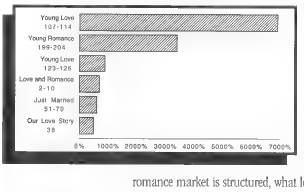
True romantics may take heart in knowing that making that commitment would have taken quite an act of faith. Five years ago, that same 874 romance book portfolio was worth $2,283, meaning that these comics showed a pretty sluggish average return of only 7% per year in the 1993-97 period.

This year, the nearly 6,000 romance books listed in the *Guide* increased as a group by 11%, which is not bad in a year when growth in high-grade Golden Age and Silver Age comics flattened out or declined. Even with these run-ups, the average price for a romance comic is still less than $40 and the top-of-the-line romance book is only $800. At such reasonable prices and the demand still burning, there are likely to be continuing investment opportunities in this often overlooked genre. The following analysis provides some insight into how the romance market is structured, what led certain books to jump so sharply in 1998, and where the next opportunities may lie.

FIG. 6: BUSCEMA COVERS

	Prices			1997-98 Increase		1993-98 Increase	
	P98	P97	P93	$	%	$	%
Love Diary (Our) 31	24	22	12	2	9%	12	100%
My Love (MCG) 40	20	5	3	15	300%	17	567%
Our Love Story 11	12	5	4	8	167%	9	243%
Our Love Story 13	12	5	4	8	167%	9	243%
My Love (MCG) 13	10	4	3	6	150%	7	233%
My Love (MCG) 15	10	4	3	6	150%	7	233%
My Love (MCG) 16	10	4	3	6	150%	7	233%
My Love (MCG) 17, 20	10	4	3	6	150%	7	233%
Our Love Story 1619,22-24,27,35	8	2	2	6	300%	6	300%
My Love (MCG) 25, 27	7	3	3	4	133%	4	133%

FIG. 9: LARGEST % PRICE INCREASES 1997-98



Above: A dozen books from the DC long-term romances, *Young Love* and *Young Romance* provided 1997-98 returns of 3000-7000%!

Scarcity Makes the Heart Grow Fonder

Figure 3 shows that the major 1998 price adjustment was to Charlton romances, which accounted for 79% of the 874 romance books that increased 100% or more this year. The market commentary in the 1998 *Guide* points out that demand for romance books overall heated up all year long, with many books selling at a premium above *Guide*. This same trend is noted in recent *Comic Book Marketplace* market reports as still going strong. As romance demand has taken off, the scarcity value of the Charltons has pushed them up in particular. The 1998 *Guide* provides some historical perspective, saying that "Charlton.. had poor distribution of their comics compared to the larger companies. Consequently, their books have always been difficult to locate. All the love, war and western theme books are scarce and popular."

Figure 4 summarizes the 686 Charltons that experienced price increases of 100% or more this year. The top of Figure 4 provides particular detail on the top-performing Charlton titles, the titles that included books with 400-700% price increases. The bottom of Figure 4 gives a briefer summary of the Charlton titles that had books whose greatest increase was a meager 100-300% in the past year.

The Best Part of Breaking Up

One interesting investment play is to try to anticipate what windfalls may come from future restructurings of romance price lists. When romance comics were in low demand, the *Overstreet Guide* tended to use relatively long runs to define price break points, and assigned no special value to the last issue in an important series. As the demand in romance has picked up, the new *Guide* has reflected increasing collector discrimination by adding more narrowly defined new price categories and breaking out the last issue for special value. Several of the biggest price increases in 1998 came from such restructurings.

For example, past *Guides* used to lump Charlton's Love and Romance issues 2-24 all in one price category. Figure 4 shows the new *Guide* now breaks these same issues into two price categories, #2-10 and #11-24. The issues in the lower-numbered new price category #2-10 were bumped up 700% compared to 400% for the other categories in order to create a stepped price function, providing a restructuring windfall gain to their lucky owners. Note, however, that no special price has yet been assigned to the last issue #24, which is still lumped in with issues #11-23. Perhaps #24 is destined for a restructuring windfall sometime in the future. Several of the 1998 last-issue restructuring windfalls are shown in Figure 5, including Marvel's *Our Love Story* #38, which jumped 500%, and *My Love* #39 , which increased 300%.

Size Matters

Figure 5 summarizes the non-Charlton titles that have led the pack in this year's romance boom. The most stunning increases are 6,900% for *Young Love* issues 107-114 and 3,400% for Young Romance issues 197-204. In both cases, these are 100-

FIG. 7: NEAL ADAMS COVERS

	P98
Heart Throbs 120	35
Young Romance Comics (DC) 154	30
Girls' Romances 134	28
Secret Hearts 120	10
Secret Hearts 134	10

FIG. 5: OTHER TITLES THAT AT LEAST DOUBLED IN PRICE IN 1997-98

	Change in Price				Prices			
	1-Year (97-98)		5 Year (93-98)					
	$Δ	%Δ	$Δ	%Δ	1993	1997	1998	Notes
DC								
Young Love								
69(00's)	138.00	9233%	138.50	107-114	1.50	2.00	140.00	100 pp
90(00's)	18.00	1233%	18.50	123-126	1.50	2.00	20.00	52 pp
25(0's)	5.00	367%	5.50	81-106, 115-122	1.50	2.00	7.00	
125's	5.00	200%	6.00	73, 78-79	3.00	4.00	9.00	
100's	9.00	350%	14.00	71-72, 74-77, 80	4.00	9.00	18.00	
Young Romance Comics								
3400%	136.00	4567%	137.00	197-204	3.00	4.00	140.00	100 pp
186%	13.00	567%	17.00	178, 183	3.00	7.00	20.00	
150%	12.00	233%	14.00	105	6.00	8.00	20.00	(Prize) Divorce
100%	4.00	167%	5.00	205, 208	3.00	4.00	8.00	
Girls' Love Stories								
214%	15.00	450%	18.00	161-170	4.00	7.00	22.00	52 pp
186%	13.00	400%	16.00	180	4.00	7.00	20.00	Last issue
Girls' Romances								
186%	13.00	400%	16.00	159-160	4.00	7.00	20.00	52 pp
100%	14.00	211%	19.00	134	9.00	11.00	28.00	Adams c/Splash
Falling in Love								
150%	12.00	300%	15.00	125-33	5.00	8.00	20.00	52 pp
Heart Throbs								
133%	20.00	338%	27.00		8.00	15.00	35.00	Adams-c
150%	12.00	233%	14.00		6.00	8.00	20.00	52 pp
Marvel								
Our Love Story								
140%	14.00	300%	18.00	1	6.00	10.00	24.00	Buscema-a
167%	7.50	243%	8.50	2-4, 6-13	3.50	4.50	12.00	Buscema-a
150%	21.00	192%	23.00	5	12.00	14.00	35.00	Steranko, Buscema-a
167%	10.00	220%	11.00	14	5.00	6.00	16.00	
300%	6.00	300%	6.00	15-17	2.00	2.00	8.00	
500%	10.00	500%	10.00	38	2.00	2.00	12.00	Last issue
My Love								
100%	12.00	200%	16.00	1	8.00	12.00	24.00	Buscema-a
100%	6.00	200%	8.00	2-9	4.00	6.00	12.00	Buscema-a
129%	9.00	167%	10.00	10	6.00	7.00	16.00	Buscema-a, Kirby-a
150%	6.00	233%	7.00	11-13, 15-20	3.00	4.00	10.00	
400%	16.00	567%	17.00	14	3.00	4.00	20.00	52 pp, Woodstock-c
133%	4.00	133%	4.00	21, 22, 24-38	3.00	3.00	7.00	
140%	7.00	200%	8.00	23	4.00	5.00	12.00	Steranko-a
300%	9.00	300%	9.00	39 (3.76)	3.00	3.00	12.00	Last issue
300%	15.00	567%	17.00	Special (12-71)	3.00	5.00	20.00	
St. John								
True Love Pictorial (St. John)				2	30.00	50.00	100.00	Baker-c/a

page giant editions of two of the most important titles in romance comic history. Oddly, these jumbo-size treasures sold for a $1.50-3.00 in 1993 and $2.00-4.00 in 1997. As this year's romance demand took off, collector attention focused on these previously significantly under-valued books and drove the prices up to $140, which some collectors would still say is a bargain. The notes column in Figure 5 shows that similar adjustments for giant 52-100 page editions accounted for many of the big 1998 price increases.

Artists Gaining New Attention

Most of the remaining price jumps are explained by a new level of attention being paid to certain artists who have been somewhat overlooked by romance collectors in the past, particularly John Buscema, Neal Adams and Jim Steranko. These artists did not make major contributions to romance books during the Atom Age, but their later fame has led to new appreciation for their earlier romance work

An interesting momentum investment play appears to be the Buscema and Adams covers in Figures 6-7. That these books are quickly gathering collector momentum is verified by the fact that most experienced price increases this year of up to 100%-300%. But even with those increases, the top-priced books are still selling for only $20-35 each. A few Adams' covers appear to have been overlooked entirely and may be set for significant adjustment this coming year.

Prices		1997-98 Increase		1993-98 Increase	
1997	P93	$	%	$	%
15	8	20	133%	27	338%
18	7	12	67%	23	329%
14	9	14	100%	19	211%
10	5	0	0%	5	100%
10	5	0	0%	5	100%

Lasting Qualities

The 1998 *Guide* provides a couple of clues as to why demand for romance books in general is taking off. The *Guide*'s market commentary attributes it partly to price. Romance comics are one of those Atom Age orphans. Like crime, horror, and westerns, they exploded onto the scene in the baby boom years and enjoyed incredible success. Yet, in today's hero-dominated market, they sell for relative peanuts. That's great news for collectors who want to find a category they can actually afford

A more intriguing insight is provided by Jackie Estrada's brilliant *Friends of Lulu* editorial in the new *Guide*. She notes that during the Atom Age, when sales of total comics dwarfed today's meager sales, females constituted roughly half of comics readership. Estrada attributes this large female readership to the diversity of subject matter in those days, ranging from romance to crime, westerns, funny animals, horror, teen humor and sports. This diversity of subject matter attracted a far broader readership for comics than we see today. Equally important was the quality of writing. Estrada serves up the quote of the year, saying that what is needed to draw more people into comics reading today are books that are "...accessible

Investing In... Romance?

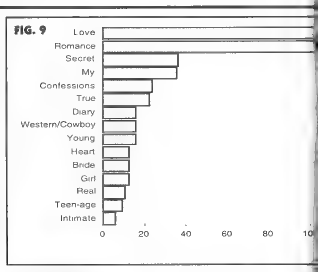
to a typical non-comics reader who happens to like a good story, is intrigued by interesting characters, and appreciates well-done artwork (sorry, part 7 of a 15-part crossover series consisting of 20 fight-scene pinup pages doesn't count!)" I believe that this sensibility is a large part of what is drawing people back to the Atom Age comics today, including the romance books.

It's certainly why my daughter and I recently ventured into the market to begin putting together a collection of romance comics. The task can be daunting. Because romance comics were so successful in their day, there are hundreds of titles and thousands of issues. To try to get our arms around the category, we entered all of the romance information we could find from *Overstreet's Comic Book Price Guide* into a massive database and crunched the numbers. All together, we entered data on 324 romance titles that encompassed 5,852 books that were published from 1947-80. We entered the data from the new 1998 *Guide* as well as from the 1993 and 1997 *Guides* so that we could get one-year and five-year trends. In lieu of 40 or 50 years collecting experience, it gave us a pretty good overview of what's out there and how it's valued by collectors. Some of the data crunched are shown in the tables and charts above and some in the ones that follow.

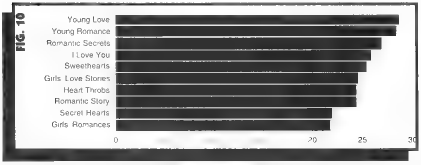
Romantic Favorites

Figures 10-11 are impressive for what they say about the major impact that this under-valued genre once had. It shows that the ten longest-running romance titles each lasted over 20 years.

FIG. 9: Publishers introduced, canceled, bought, sold and renamed romance titles at a dizzying pace at the height of the Atom Age. In the second half of 1949, they came up with an average of 17 new titles every month! In the scramble to find winning titles, publishers juggled about a dozen or two of the same words around to keep coming up with new entries.

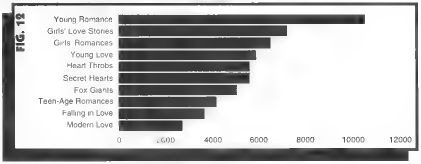


HIGHEST PRICE: ALL TITLES

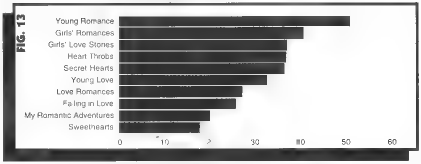


HIGHEST $$: W/100+ ISSUES

HIGHEST VALUE TITLES



MOST PROLIFIC: TOTAL ISS.



LONGEST RUNNING TITLES

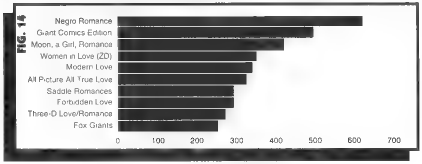


FIG. 16	Total Value	Total Books	High Price	Avg Price	Low Price
1 Baker	17,142	182	725	94	20
2 Simon & Kirby	13,972	192	290	73	7
3 Cole	8,747	89	280	98	8
4 Wood	8,215	64	485	128	14
5 Powell	5,910	210	180	28	8
6 Ward	5,446	59	260	92	14
7 Kinstler	4,867	35	525	139	8
8 Ingels	4,805	14	485	343	90
9 Feldstein	4,280	15	485	321	100
10 Toth	3,645	56	420	65	7
11 Whitney	3,350	136	180	25	10
12 Disbrow	2,810	35	110	80	22
13 Gustavson	2,750	24	260	115	45
14 Kamen	2,651	50	220	53	6
15 Swayze	2,585	94	95	28	14
16 Frazetta	2,120	15	340	141	20
17 Severin	1,930	27	150	71	30
18 Estrada	1,915	16	280	120	40
19 Evans	1,624	16	800	102	26
20 Crandall	1,453	10	500	145	15
21 Coletta	1,423	55	60	26	10
22 Everett	1,264	26	220	49	8
23 Meskin	1,235	15	150	82	20
24 Elder	1,075	14	150	77	40
25 Whitman	815	8	210	102	85

FIG. 16: MOST HIGHLY VALUED ROMANCE ARTISTS

Young Love and *Young Romance* ran for nearly 30 years. These books were introduced a few years after W.W.II, survived the "Werthamism" of the 1950s, the social revolution of the 1960s, and sold right through most of the feminist 1970s. While breaking the 100-issue barrier is rare for any title in any genre, the top ten romance comics all ran for over 125 issues, with *Young Romance* in a class by itself at 208 issues.

Young Romance emerges from the data as being one of the most significant collectibles. Figure 12 shows that it ranks as number 1 in terms of the total value of the run. To buy the entire 208-book run (treating the Prize and DC years as a continuous title) in NM would cost a little over $10,000 at today's

FIG. 17: SIMON & KIRBY #1s	Prices			1997-98 Increase		1993-98 Increase	
	P98	P97	P93	$	%	$	%
Young Romance Comics (Prize) 1	290	270	140	20	7%	150	107%
Young Love (Prize) 1	275	260	125	15	6%	150	120%
In Love 1	200	180	80	20	11%	120	150%
My Date Comics 1	200	185	120	15	8%	80	67%
Young Brides (True Love Secrets)	180	165	80	15	9%	100	125%
Real West Romances 1	130	120	80	10	8%	50	63%

FIG. 18: MOST VALUABLE BAKER COVERS	Prices			1997-98 Increase		1993-98 Increase	
	P98	P97	P93	$	%	$	%
Giant Comics Edition 12	725	700	350	25	4%	375	107%
Giant Comics Edition 15	420	400	200	20	5%	220	110%
Teen-Age Temptations 1	280	265	130	15	6%	150	115%
Romance and Confession Stories 1	250	235	175	15	6%	75	43%
Teen-Age Romances 1	240	220	120	20	9%	120	100%
Wartime Romances 1	180	170	85	10	6%	95	112%
Pictorial Confessions 1	175	155	84	20	13%	91	108%
Pictorial Love Stories (St. John) 1	160	150	80	10	7%	80	100%
Pictorial Romances 17, 20	160	150	85	10	7%	75	88%
Teen-Age Romances 39, 43, 19,21,22	140	130	70	10	8%	70	100%

FIG. 19: CHEAPEST BAKER COVERS-AND-ART	Prices			1997-98 Increase		1993-98 Increase	
	P98	P97	P93	$	%	$	%
Love Confessions 49	35	32	18	3	9%	17	94%
Brides Romances 23	40	35	22	5	14%	18	82%
Girls in Love (Quality) 57	40	38	28	2	5%	12	43%
Teen-Age Romances 32	40	28	16	12	43%	24	150%
Wedding Bells 16	45	40	22	5	13%	23	105%
Exotic Romances 27	60	50	30	10	20%	30	100%
Exotic Romances 31	60	50	30	10	20%	30	100%
Teen-Age Romances 35	60	42	25	18	43%	35	140%
Going Steady (St. John) 12	60	55	28	5	9%	32	114%
Wartime Romances 9,11, 12, 16,18	70	65	30	5	8%	40	133%
Pictorial Romances 14, 21-24	75	60	32	15	25%	43	134%

Column A	Column B
Secret	Love
Confidential	Romance
Intimate	Affair
True	Experiences
Real	Diary
Teen-age	Confessions
Young	Adventure
High School	
Western/Cowboy	
Romantic	
Brides	
My	
Girls'	

1 20 140

Guide, even after the big 1998 jump. There are a lot of good reasons for *Young Romance*'s preeminence.

First of all, even if the title had been a flop, its #1 issue would have been highly collectible, since it is widely regarded as the first romantic series comic, introduced in September 1947. One alternative claim to being the most valuable first romance comic is *Romantic Picture Novelettes*, a single book published in 1946 that featured Mary Worth comic strip reprints, and included in the Overstreet Hall of Fame as the first romance comic. Another alternative is *My Date Comics*, which was introduced in July 1949, two months before *Young Romance*. But serious romance collectors characterize that first issue of *My Date* as being a teen humor magazine, more akin to Archie. Most hobbyists generally agree that *Young Romance* is the first serious romance book that was part of an ongoing series of original stories and art.

And what stories and art! Simon and Kirby produced 88 issues of *Young Romance*, with those issues accounting for almost 75% of the total value for the run.

Figure 13 shows that *Young Romance* also ranks number 1 in terms of highest average price per book in the run, provided that you limit the comparison to titles with similarly long runs.

Using the random romance title generator at left, you can create most of the titles, and maybe a few more. For example, "My Confidential Western Affair" had not been used... yet!

Investing in . . . Romance?

The honor of highest average price per book among all romance books goes to various shorter-run titles that have special collector interest (Figure 14).

Figures 14-15 together detail these special attractions. *Negro Romance*(s) takes four of the top-ten rankings for highest-priced romance books in Figure 15, apparently because of its novel reflection of the racial stratification of the Atom Age. Striking cover art with a somewhat "naughty" bent is also popular, as represented by the #2 ranked book being Matt Baker's famous cover of a prostitute leaning on a lamp post on the cover of *Giant Comics Edition* #12 (Diary Secrets). And 14 of the top 40 romance books are EC comics, reflecting the general opinion that EC produced among the best written and drawn books of any period.

FIG. 15: TOP 40 ROMANCE BOOKS—HIGHEST 1998 PRICES

GC: Giant Comics Edition
FG: Fox Giant

		Price	Publisher	Notes
1	Negro Romance 1	800	Fawcett	Evans-a
2	GC 12. Diary Secrets	725	St. John	Baker-c/a, prostitute-c
3	Negro Romance 2	600	Fawcett	
4	Negro Romance 3	600	Fawcett	
5	Intimate Confessions (Realistic) 1	525	Realistic	Kinstler-c/a
6	Forbidden Love 1	500	Quality	Scarce; Classic ph
7	Moon, a Girl, Romance 12	485	EC	Scarce; Feldstein-c-a; Wood-a
8	Moon, a Girl, Romance 9	475	EC	Feldstein-c-a; Ingels-a
9	Negro Romances 4	475	Charlton	
10	GC 9: Romance & Confession Stories	450	St. John	Baker-a;132 pp
11	GC 15: Romances	420	St. John	Baker-c
12	Modern Love 1	420	EC	Feldstein-c-a
13	Romance Trail 1	420	DC	Toth-a
14	Young Lovers 18	400	Charlton	Scarce; Elvis cover
15	GC 13. Romances	385	St. John	Baker-a
16	Girls' Love Stories 1	385	DC	Toth-a
17	Modern Love 4	385	EC	Scarce; Feldstein-c
18	Modern Love 5	385	EC	Scarce, Feldstein-c; Wood-a
19	Modern Love 6	385	EC	Scarce; Feldstein-c, Wood-a
20	Girls' Romances 1	375	DC	
21	Secret Hearts 1	370	DC	Kinstler-a
22	Moon, a Girl, Romance 10	360	EC	Feldstein-c-a; Wood-a
23	Moon, a Girl, Romance 11	360	EC	Feldstein-c-a; Wood-a
24	Frontier Romances 1	350	Avon	SOTI
25	Women in Love 1	350	Ziff-Davis	Scarce; Kinstler-a
26	Personal Love (Famous) 32	340	Fam. Fun.	Frazetta-a
27	All Picture All True Love Story 1	325	St. John	Canteen Kate by Baker
28	Modern Love 2	310	EC	Craig/Feldstein-c
29	Saddle Romances 10	300	EC	First Wood-a for EC
30	Young Romance Comics (Prize) 1	290	Prize	Simon & Kirby-c/a
31	FG: Burning Romances	285	Fox	
32	FG: Strange Love	285	Fox	
33	FG Throbbing Love	285	Fox	POP
34	Saddle Romances 11	285	EC	Ingels-c-a
35	Saddle Romances 9	285	EC	Feldstein-c; Wood-a
36	Film Stars Romances 1	280	Star	L.B. Cole-c; lingerie
37	Modern Love 7	280	EC	Feldstein-c; Wood-a
38	Modern Love 8	280	EC	Scarce; Kinstler-a
39	Strange Confessions 1	280	Ziff Davis	Baker-c/a; Estrada-a
40	Teen-Age Temptations 1	280	St. John	

The Art of Love

Great art is one of the main factors that drives the collectibility value of romance comics. Figure 16 shows the top 25 most highly valued romance artists, with Matt Baker and Simon & Kirby dominating the list. Matt Baker worked on 182 romance books that have a current market value of over $17,000 and Simon & Kirby are close behind with 192 books with a total value of about $14,000. The EC artists (Wood, Ingles, Feldstein, Kamen, and Crandall) are scattered down the list as well, and are notable for their high average price per book.

Figures 17-19 summarize the main books by some of the most important romance artists, providing some guidance to someone entering the field and trying to figure out where to start. These books generally represent momentum investment plays. They are among the romance books that are considered among the top of the line now, and are most likely to benefit fully from any continuance of the romance renaissance. These old standards include the Simon & Kirby #1 collection in Figure 17 and the most valuable Matt Baker covers in Figure 18. Note that these classics only grew in the 4-13% range in 1998 as pricing adjustments focused on other issues. They may be set for some catch up this year.

Others appear to represent excellent value plays that could result in substantial investment return over the next few years. Figure 19, for example, shows 19 books for which Matt Baker drew the covers and some of the interior art, but which are still significantly underpriced even compared to other Matt Baker books. All 19 of these books are priced in the $35-75 range in the 1998 *Guide*.

The Heart of the Matter

This number crunching exercise has helped my daughter and I get our arms around the romance genre and set some priorities among the nearly 6,000 books to choose from. Of course, the numbers don't reveal the real gems in terms of subjective qualities. For that, you'll want to read everything you can get your hands on that Michelle Nolan has ever written on romance comics, talk to knowledgeable dealers and other collectors, and start diving into some of the well-drawn, well-written issues for yourself. Like we did, you are likely to find hours of collecting joy and maybe some good investments.

THE SUBJECTIVE-ADJECTIVE GRADING SCALE

by Stephen H. Gentner

Glossy! Crisp! Gem! Sharp! Brilliant!... are we talking diamonds? cars? coins?... nope, comics. Adjectives help people visualize the given qualities of a given item for sale. To put teeth into each one and expect other people to share your weighting of that given adjective is another thing.

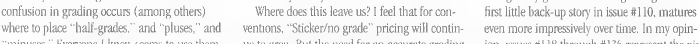
The subjective nature of grading a given defect, and the subsequent price adjustment for said defect opens the door for real problems. A faint crease on the cover, missing the characters or a ^" back cover tear... how do you quantify both aesthetically as well as financially? The best way is to: A) Talk with someone you know who has experience grading comics and then listen carefully, then B) Grade a mess of books yourself. Try and establish benchmark books which best represent each grade. As you grade more, you can keep those benchmarks in your head, and refine the grading further to include texture/feel and even smell! Nowadays however, a given grade even agreed upon does not necessarily reflect the price found in *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*.

More and more dealers, particularly at conventions, put only a price sticker on books for sale. When you ask what the grade is, the response is generally, "What do you think it is... but in any event, that is the price." This disconnect between grade and price is disconcerting. I always feel more comfortable knowing the seller's grade of a book... both on the sale at hand and for further reference. Then if I am paying over guide, based on the condition. I can make that decision. I can understand why dealers do this... some sharpshooter comes up and tries to beat up on their grading and hopefully get a better price based on the lower grade. What a pain. The "Gentner Scale:" The "Subjective-Adjective Scale."—In the interests of defining a workable, uniform scale of grades for comics, my years in the hobby have brought me to this scale. The confusion in grading occurs (among others) where to place "half-grades," and "pluses," and "minuses." Everyone I know seems to use them, so I wanted to put them into a workable context.

The 20 gradations would seem to cover the lion's share of books we generally see. "Poor" or "Poor+" seem so ludicrous as a differentiation. I left them off. I mean, at that level, how do you tell what to call it? "You're trying to screw me over... that book is at least a FAIR!!!"

True "mint" books occur so seldom, that even the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* avoids that designation. Desirability and scarcity on a true mint book in relation to price could command 1.25x, 5x, or even 10x of NM guide. Pricing at this level is tricky, because the economies of scale have to be applied. Dollar wise, I have found there are given levels of dollars where you will find given players. $100 or under, $500, $1,000, $1,500, $2,000 and up. So say as an example you have a 10x guide on a true mint copy of *Top Cat* #1, dollar wise that is only $400. 10x guide on *Flash* #105 is $52,000! The economies of scale have to be applied because of the price resistance at that dollar level for the scarcity, desirability, and availability of that book. On expensive books, the multiples of guide tend to fade in relation to the number of thousand dollars involved. The number of players in that rarefied air are few, so be careful how and what you buy.

Where does this leave us? I feel that for conventions, "Sticker/no grade" pricing will continue to grow. But the need for an accurate grading scale is essential for those of us who purchase and sell comics through the mail. As given dealers provide samples of their grading and pricing via your purchases, you then apply your own benchmarks to see if you agree first in grading... and then in price. After a while, you'll be able to visualize the quality of the material before it comes in the mail. I also feel that collectors must patronize a selection of dealers, because (obviously) no one dealer has everything. Dealer A is a ¼ to ½ grade high, dealer B graders lower, on purpose, to be sure picky collectors won't balk at the grade. Sellers...price the books as you will—but please give us a fair grade to help us navigate the sale. Then we collectors will have a chance for an informed sale.



THE STRANGE TALE OF THE DOUBLE-WHAMMY!

by Craig R. Rader

Strange Tales is a great title to collect, for its aesthetic beauty and readability; particularly "the Hero run" of issues from #101 through #168 (end of SA series). Some may not agree with me that *ST* #101 is "Human Torch #1." Some would reserve that label for the Golden Age android torch in *Marvel Comics* #1 (Oct/Nov 1939). But for me, *ST* #101 will always be "the first Human Torch" (of the Silver Age). It's cool that the Torch was a good enough character to get his own solo series apart from the *Fantastic Four* magazine, and that it occurred so early in the Marvel Age renaissance (1962).

The variety of talented artists within this run of issues is quite impressive, and includes Jack Kirby, Dick Ayers, Steve Ditko, Bob Powell, Marie Severin, Bill Everett, and Jim Steranko. Over time, the series also reflects the progression (toward maturity and refinement) of Marvel Age of Comics artwork, from rudimentary 1962 all the way up to psychedelic '68.

The classic Ditko Dr. Strange "look" was defined by portions of this run. His artwork, though very good from the beginning with that first little back-up story in issue #110, matures even more impressively over time. In my opinion, issues #118 through #136 represent the pin-

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nacle of Ditko's work on Dr. Strange.

Consider also Steranko's innovative, groundbreaking delineations of Nick Fury & S.H.I.E.L.D. in the relatively later issues of the series. *SI* #151 is particularly special because it's Steranko art with Jack Kirby layouts. It was also Steranko's first book assignment when he came to Marvel at the end of 1966.

Anyway you cut it... *Strange Tales* is a Silver Age Marvel classic and an unabashed favorite of mine since I first read it back in 1965-1967.

And it is as a longtime fan and collector that I'd like to address some relevant aspects of collecting comics at this juncture in time, particularly in light of the major changes inaugurated by the most recent *Overstreet Guide*, regarding grade and price structures. I also have some observations about low grade "versus" high grade collecting practices.

We've got a reality we can work with now... something solid for the foreseeable future. The 1998 *Overstreet "Big Book"* is well circulated in comics fandom now, having reinforced those landmark changes ushered in last November by the Update in regard to price adjustments on low, medium, and high grade comic books. I believe I have courage enough to embrace, albeit uncomfortably (say, like Death in her evening shroud), the fact that medium grade Silver Age books are no longer good investments. Not necessarily bad, but just not good investments. I can no longer argue to my stock market rep that old comic books in general are as good or better an investment vehicle as bank CDs, stocks, or U.S. Treasury savings bonds. Sure, if you've already got your pedigree, Mile High copy of *Green Lantern* #1 or white-paged VF+ copies of Amazing Spider-Man #s 3, 6, and 14, then you're still doing fine, and probably better than fine if you graded 'em accurately. However, most of us collectors of run-of-the-mill, mid to late '60s medium grade material had better really enjoy reading our comics like we always say we do 'cause such books haven't really stood the test of time investment-wise for a medium range time period of 1989 to the present.

1989 is an excellent baseline or starting off point for such analysis, because that year witnessed the phenomenal impact of the Nicholson-Joker *Batman* movie in the summertime and then the subsequent, dramatic price increases for Silver Age material which occurred shortly thereafter and well on into 1990 also. Consider all

those Fine+ and FN/VF Silver Age books I bought at Third Planet comic shop here in Houston between Summer 1989 and Fall of 1992: taken together as a whole, they're still a valuable material possession and I'm glad I've accumulated 'em. But good investments? Not hardly. Yet I really enjoyed collecting those books. That's gotta count for something. It may count for a lot. Depending on your perspective. That summer of 1989, I rediscovered the wonder of collecting comics. With that first purchase of *Fantastic Four* #44 at Third Planet in June, I was immediately swept back to childhood experiences of Catholic grade school recess, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* TV show, and Little League baseball practice out on freshly cut grass in Springtime.

The *FF* #44 was a FN/VF copy I bought for $9.50. So what's it worth by today's standards? Well, if you do FN/VF at around 50% of NM guide, it's about a $30 book. Probably worth three times what I originally paid for it. That's not very impressive in the context of a nine year time span, '89 to the present. Yet it's a nice book and I've enjoyed owning it. (Incidentally, as Keith Contarino pointed out years ago in the original series run of the *Overstreet Price Update*, *FF* #44 is the first Inhumans appearance, not 45. I don't believe that's ever been corrected in the "Big Book," even with the current Edition.)

On the positive side, I've still got my Fine copy of *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #2 (1965). That is one cool book: a new (for '65, that is) Dr. Strange x-over story, with Steve Ditko artwork emblematic of that particular time period in the "Marvel Age Of Comics." There's several reprints of early Spidey classics also in that square-bound issue. Well, I bought that copy for $14 around the same time period as the other book, and by today's standards, the *Spidey Annual* is worth $75 in Fine. Not bad.

Keith Contarino made a tidy statement years ago which has stuck with me: "An accurately graded Fine is a pretty nice looking book." I always liked that, as I went about hoarding medium grade material through the early 1990s. I felt good about it because I graded my books strictly and thought I had a solid sense of what my collection's value was over time, with each successive edition of the old, bi-monthly *Overstreet Price Update*. However, Contarino's tidy statement about accurately-graded Fines doesn't comfort me that much anymore because the fact of the matter is, that in several important ways, the bottom's fallen out of Fine… value-wise, as a grade category.

With the advent of last November's *Update* supplement and this April's *Overstreet Price Guide*, Fine has suffered a "double whammy" effect, value-wise.

It wasn't just low and medium grade books which were adjusted downward in price value, but many issues in the NM category also underwent notable reductions, particularly some of the SA Marvel titles, such as *Strange Tales*, *Tales to Astonish*, and *Tales Of Suspense*. Reduction of such books in NM automatically results in a decrease in the Fine value also. The second "whammy" was the (concomitant) devaluing of Fine down to 30% of NM value, as opposed to around 40% last year.

So basically that's 30% of an (also) reduced NM value

A good example of this is the *Strange Tales* run of issues from #136-147; books representative of run-of-the-mill '60's Marvels. Those books "Guided" at $40 NM in last year's *Overstreet Annual*, but leveled off at $30 with this April's *Guide*. That's a significant, 25% drop in value on some NM books! When you consider that that particular run of issues was also $40 NM in the earlier, 1996 *Guide* (didn't go up "annually" in 1997), the books have lost considerable value over a two year period. So *Strange Tales* #136 is currently valued at $9 in Fine as compared to a value of $17 for Fine last year. That's a heckuva drop to absorb for a collector/investor! Note the similar drops in *Suspense* and *Astonish* or, say, *Conan The Barbarian* #1 (1970). Anyway, it's factors such as these that have really devalued the Fine grade category; although intellectually, I understand the necessity for some such changes and acknowledge that in the long run, the readjustments will probably be good for the hobby and its stability over time. I'm willing to take the "long view."

However, in the particular case of the *Strange Tales* issues, I can tell you from personal experience (having over the years visited the major shops in Houston which handle Silver Age material) that it is very seldom, if at all that you will find a true NM copy of any of these books; occasionally there's a VF+ copy with off-white pages. (The best copy I ever found was an absolutely beautiful VF/NM #150 with white pages, at Bedrock City Comic Company.) Personally, I've never come upon what I would consider a solid NM copy of any of these issues. (Maybe I grade too strict and the world reels at my rigidity; but maybe not.)

So what does all this say in light of the fact that such books were dropped 25% in NM category? It doesn't say anything, you have to interpret it! And my interpretation is that, at least with these particular books, the *Overstreet* NM value does not accurately reflect actual regional conditions here in Houston, Texas. I thought that *Strange Tales* #136 at its previous level of $40 NM was just fine,considering that I never saw one!

Okay, so I'm sitting here with my "accurately graded Fine" and it's "a pretty nice looking book," but the comic has literally lost its identity as an investment vehicle.

So what I've got is a nice reading copy, as valuable as that might be. President George Bush, please read my lips: It will take many years for *Strange Tales* #136-147 in Fine grade to even rise back up to its previous level of $17. And from an investment standpoint, who wants to wait three to four years for these books to inch their way back up to 1996/97 values? Many of the more expensive and key SA books in Fine are listed at a value even less than 30% of NM price. (*FF* #4 is a good example of this.) That pattern has been true historically of *Overstreet* price structure; yet I've never fully understood it, and I made a "C" in high school Introductory Algebra in 1975.

Why is a key, expensive book in Fine grade (now follow me closely here) worth less percentage-wise (of NM) than a common, inexpensive book? Seems like the more desired book would be "worth more" relatively in the Fine to Near Mint ratio, than the less desirable book in similar grade. Go figure.

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Atom Age is still on fire!

Some of the marketplace lessons we've learned during the past few years have been pretty tough on us collectors. When we use dealer buying lists as the main indicator of market direction, we are often one step behind the trends. If we use the rumor mill, we often don't factor in geographic variability as well as the "hype factor" (almost inevitably, by the time you hear that, say, Daredevil is "hot," the crest of collector demand is already past). And when we use private collector want lists, we forget that as soon as those individuals "fill the holes" the demand may dry up.

Another "lesson" we've learned is that the double digit appreciation we've come to expect in previous years is not a guarantee. This is supported not only by the new Guide, but also by the fact that dealers are now mainly concentrating their buying on high grade keys and high demand genres again (as these seem the only areas they can depend on for immediate turn around). High grade key issues are bringing good resale, but they always have.

On the other side of the coin, just because we don't hear about notable sales or spectacular auction results, it doesn't mean they didn't happen (and they are happening... a lot). We aren't privy to most because customers are "protected" by their dealers, and their purchases are not often made public. Also, for various reasons (ego perhaps?) collectors are reluctant to admit when they have "bailed out" and sold some of their books. All this while the vast majority of collectors continue to quietly build their collections without much notoriety or fanfare.

Remember the "crash" of the fine art market and collector car market in the early '90s? Well, those hobbies are back with a vengeance... yet where is the media fanfare? These two examples are part of the last "lesson" I want to address... which is the lack of balanced coverage. When I analyze the market, I always try to remember that bad news travels fast, yet slow-growth-good-news and steady sales gets little press in the trade publications. For serious collectors, it's a point worth remembering.

Golden Age - If the Golden Age is so down, there's more material available than buyers, and no one is buying lower grade issues, then why wasn't there more material in the Sotheby's auction? Why don't we see page after page of blowout bargain giveaways in ads or on the net? Why don't we see GA prices dropping through the floor at conventions?

You know the answer as well as I... it seems clear that collectors are still buying GA, although they are being a bit more finicky (if that's possible) and selective.

Sales: All Flash #2 GD $280; All Select #1 FR $500; Batman #2 aFN $1,900; Big Shot #1 aVF $600; Daring Comics #12 VF $700; Fantastic Comics #1 FR $240; Four Color #29 FN $650; Funnies #30 FN $420; Hit Comics #1 FR $200; Human Torch #6 aVF $500; Large Feature Comic #3 VG $500; New York Fair 1940 aGD $700; Prize Comics #7 aVF $550; Sub-Mariner #1 FR $980; Superman #2 VG $1,680.

Atom Age - To date, the frenzied demand for this genre has lasted longer than the last GA run or even the Silver run of the early '90s. With the Guide Atom Age values not changing much, the demand has only increased. The multiples for pre-Code horror and even for pre-Code crime are incredible! Obscure Good Girl books and Matt Baker Romance and one shots lead the way. Demand for Fox Romance is very high and they are on nearly everyone's want list. Outstanding multiples still are the norm, and never cease to amaze me or the collectors and dealers in my network. 1946-56 material is still on fire!

Sales: Blue Beetle #54 GD $190; Dear Beatrix Fairfax #6 VF/NM $80; Horrors #12 VF $195; Hot Stuff the little devil #1 FN $140; Jungle #163 VF $95; Lawbreakers Susp. St. #11 FN $280; Leading #41 FN $70; Love St. *Continued on page 70*

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Sales of "run" type books are overall much improved from the last couple of years. Other advisors have already said it, but let me add my voice—Bob Overstreet did the right thing by widening the spread from GD to NM and thus lowering the price of books in VF or less condition. Looking over my last catalogue, I see that for the first time in two years, GD, VG and FN condition books have sold really well! I know many collectors and dealers were not happy with the reductions. One common remark: "I wish I had dumped all my Silver Age before they dropped in price by a third." Well, guess what, the time to have done that was about 3 1/2 or more years ago. Anyone enjoying any success in selling lower grade books did so by selling at 50% or more off Guide, and if the Guide doesn't reflect what books are really worth, what's the point?

Bronze Age I run Bronze Age auctions in my quarterly catalogues, and the prices obtained are indicative of where the market is going. Weird War Tales #1 has established itself as a legitimate key; I've had a high grade copy in each of my last three auctions, and each and every time the book brought $150. During this time Guide ranged from $25 to $150, so it's not just bargain hunters. Compare this to the Young Love/Young Romance 100 pagers. When they listed for less than five bucks apiece, they were hotly bid up to (in my auctions, anyway) the $70 to $90 dollar range. Now that they are listed at the nose bleed price of $140 apiece (Who reports these prices?) fewer collectors are chasing them and they are selling in the

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#5 FN $95; Mitzi #1 VF $180; My Life #8 VF $160; My Secret Story #28 FN $95; Patsy & Hedy #1 VF/NM $220; Sheena #18 FN $75; Sherry the Showgirl #1 FN $60; Teenage Rom. #9 FN $80; Terror of the Jungle #21 FN $110; This Magazine Is Haunted #10 GD $68; Wow Comics #69 NM $200.

Silver Age - As the market still comes to terms with the price reductions, mixed responses are being reported. Dealers that balk at traditional percentages for low and mid grade but are still paying well for most in-grade keys as they get more and more scarce. High grade early DC leads the way, with post code 10¢ Strange Adventures and Mystery In Space, Showcase #15-19, and Flash #106-122 in high demand.

Sales. Avengers #1 VF/NM $220; Bat Lash #1 NM $40; Brave & Bold #34 VF $1400; Daredevil #1 FN $210 X-men #1 GD $250; Flash Comics #123 GD/VG $160; Green Lantern #1 GD $275; I Spy #1 FN $100; Mission Impossible #1 FN $35; Mystery in Space #53 GD $170, #87 VF $140; Spectre #1 VF/NM $120; Strange Adventures #117 FN $180; Teen Titans #1 GD $18.

Bronze Age - In the last month, very few books are going for "wild" multiples unless they're truly NM or better (and those can be counted on one hand). Condition is everything when it comes to eye-popping prices. You can pretty much bet that if it's a square-bound/Giant in grade, demand will be high. Day in and day out Bronze Age records are being set, if you have the right high grade material.

Sales. Adventure Comics #425 NM $20; Brave & Bold #100 VF+ $35, #113 VF/NM $22; Crypt of Shadows #1 NM $14; DC 100 Page Special #6 GD $55; Johnny Thunder #1 NM $30; Marvel Premiere #3 NM $24; Marvel Spotlight #3 NM $36, #12 VF $10; Phantom Stranger #23 NM $18; Scary Tales #1 NM $12; Shadow Comics #3 VF/NM $10; Shazam #1 NM $18; Worlds Finest Comics #215 NM- $32; Young Love #126 VF/NM $50.

MARKET REPORTS

$50-65 dollar range.

Note these observations are only about the 100 page issues of those specific titles—overall, romance is selling very well, and DC 100 page Super Spectacular #5 (Love Stories) is probably the scarcest and most sought after Bronze Age key. (VG @ $150) House of Mystery & House of Secrets after the change to the mystery format are much in demand. Guide has mostly caught up with the prices these books bring, with the exception of House Of Mystery #174 and House of Secrets #81—these "first" issues still bring well over Guide. (HOM #174 vf @ $55, HOS #81fn+ @ $40)

For the last couple of years, it's been the before mentioned titles plus a lot of other odd ball, hard to find and/or oversize titles that has driven Bronze—things like Night Nurse (#1vf @ $45) Secrets of Sinister House (#1-#5nm @ $165) Dark Mansion Forbidden Love (#1nm @ $75) Vampirella Color Special (soft cover, NM @ $150) Vault of Evil (#1nm @ $14) It's still these books and many like them that drive the Bronze Age market, but I see signs of the superhero reemerging.

The chances of finding Night Nurse, Peter the Pest, Dark Mansion and any 100 page giants really cheap is all but gone. At their listed prices, collectors are taking another look at the superhero books of the '70s. I didn't notice it at first, but Defenders, Luke Cage, Team-Up and Two-In-One below issue #30 are all gone. They have sold, and could have sold several times over. Red Wolf, Adams or Smith Avengers and Kirby's mid '70's Marvel books are almost hot.

Silver Age - Silver is now selling here in all grades, not just NM and not just at 50+% off Guide. Two interesting observations: I've had perhaps 6-10 collectors I haven't heard from in years place orders after the drop in prices—all said they had felt "priced out" of the market until now. I also had maybe another 10 collectors that called and bought nothing but GD & VG books (and you know, a hundred bucks buys a big stack of GD and VG comics). I tend to purchase entire collections, and it is really nice to again have the lower grade books selling well.

I don't set a lot of records with Silver, nor move a lot of big keys. It's just consistent, steady sales that add up. Examples: Strange Tales #116vf @ $50, #123nm @ $50, #123vf-@ 22, Lois Lane #77fn @ $6.50, Detective Comics 337nm- @ $30.

Older Stuff I seldom get Golden Age. I find most 1950's books (Sci-fi, Horror, Good Girl, Bad Girl, Jungle Girl, Westerns and even Archies) sell well when they are less than $50 bucks or so. Examples: World of Fantasy #17vf @ $70, Web of Evil #20vg @ $20 Web of Mystery #23fair @ $10, Jungle Comics #84vg @ $30, #111vg, #146vg @ $24 each.

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To sum it up . Golden Age is king; Silver Age is cheap but still nice; and newer stuff is my bread and butter. We sell a good amount of comics from mid '60s to present in our stores all the time. We try to price a lot of books so there will be little sales resistance, which means we price to sell and usually under Guide in the fair-poor-good-vg range (and we sell a fair amount of it). Price points of $1-2 is not a problem to most reader/collectors.

Silver Age - With the exception of high grade and most keys, you have to discount the heck out of them to get them to go. 50% off is now the norm… with many dealers starting at about 20% for low end condition up to VG. In the stores, we price at or below Guide and have sales (50% off and at shows—the same) Otherwise it sits. Higher quality Silver Age (meaning Fine to VF) we price below Guide and it will move when we hit the 30% off mark.

Golden Age - I find that there is no shortage of buyers in this segment of the market.. and no shortage of product. Once again with the exception of high grade, pedigree, and big books (Action 1 or Adventure 40), I find most of my sales in the $1,000 and below range with most of the action below $500 per book. I'm sure this is not new info to anyone in the biz. What I find hard to believe is the amount of available books if you have the cash or are willing to pay 60% of Guide for average product.

Geographically variable sales We seem to sell different genres in different markets. Lots of Superman/Batman family titles go to the midwest and the eastern seaboard. Good girl books seem to go better in the Ohio,

Kentucky, Pennsylvania areas. Based on previous show experience, here's how I generalize what will sell at the cons throughout the year.

At Megacon in Florida . . Superman/Batman and DC Gold and Silver as well as Marvel Silver keys; at Motor City, Chicago, Novi and Dearborn our primary sellers are mainly DC Gold, pulps, DC Silver (any), some Timelys, some esoteric stuff, horror, and original art; at Chicago in July and San Diego in August. . . anything goes; at Heroes Con, Charlotte. . . Marvel Silver and DC Silver primarily, Big Apple Con, New York . . Gold and only Gold for me; at Pittsburgh Con. . . DC Gold, DC Silver and some good Fawcett stuff, at Kansas City, Dallas, and Oklahoma City. . Marvel Silver Age, at Tulsa . . Gold and some Silver, at Minnesota .. Golden Age, all types of DC and Marvel Silver Age, pre-hero Marvels, and horror; at Supercon. . . Golden Age, horror and pre hero Marvel, pulps, original art, at Wondercon. . same as Supercon only more Golden Age, and at Indianapolis. . . cheap Marvel and DC Silver Age

Some sales: Action #53 gd $95, Amazing Fantasy #15 fr/gd $700, appvf $2,900, fr gd $675, Amazing Spider-Man #1 vg $1,500, #1 fr+ $550, #3 vg+ $500, #7 f/vf $475; AF #15 gd $1,700, All American #26 appvf $310, #26 fn/vf $400; All Flash #1 fr/gd $600; All Select #11, All Star #22 gd $100, #49 gd $100; All Winners #2 vf- $1,795, Batman #1 appvf+ $12,000; #11 vg $450; #15 vg+ $500, #25 vg $350; #47 appvf $550, #100 gd $250; #232 nm $65, Batman 3D nm $250; Blonde Phantom #14 vf- $500

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Showcase #8 fr $450, #9 gd- $375, #10 gd $150, #13 vg- $300, #14 coupon out bc $200, Strange Tales #1 fn/vf $875, #2 vg+ $285, #32 vf $165; Sun Girl #1 gd $110, Superman #2 nbc $500, #4 fn+ $1,600, #9 gd $150, Sub-Mariner #31 gd $75; Tales Of Suspense #39 gd- $250, c+p appnm $850, USA #1 vg (replaced cf) $1,100, #5 fn+ $600; Venus #1 gd $83, #18 vf $125; Whiz #47 vg $95, #24 vg/fn $225, Witness #1 gd- $100; Wonder Woman #1 nbc white pages $1,100; Weird Science-Fantasy #29 gd $125; X-Men #1 fn+ $2,500, #1 vg $750, #1 gd $350, Young Men #24 gd+ $650.

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In what proved to be the best sale in the nine year history of Philip Weiss Auctions, few real surprises were found. The sales in the comic section seemed to go with the general market trend. Gold is hot, Silver is not. Restored books are receiving little or greatly diminished attention.

The top selling lot in the 800+ lot sale was a beautiful unrestored Fine+ copy of Big Book of Fun Comics. This might well be the finest copy in existence, it brought $10,175 with buyer's premium. More Fun #1 also very scarce, with nice paper restoration brought $3,850. Comic art and strip art really sold well

A fabulous 24" high pen and ink drawing of Superman by Joe Shuster and inscribed by both Seigel and Shuster to Hall of Fame pitcher Lefty Gomez brought just over $6,000 with B P Quite honestly, I felt this was a bargain and was the nicest Superman illustration I have seen in 30 years of comic collecting. Strip art was strong, with the better known artists commanding high prices A McCay Sammy Sneeze brought $1,980, while a Hogarth Tarzan Sunday failed to sell despite a $3,000 bid. The key to selling strip art is having "fresh" pieces and not rehashed and often offered pieces

The main "meat" of the sale was Part 1 of the Fred Cook Pulp collection. I have always tried to be a main auction house for Pulp magazines, and handling this collection was a great thrill The first portion of this collection brought in excess of $25,000

Additionally, a run of 36 issues of The Spider hammered down at $5,830—more than $150 per issue A complete run of G-8 Pulps brought $6,850, an Amazing Stories Annual in high grade, one of the scarcest science fiction pulps brought $1,166 Miscellaneous items sold well, with a great deal of interest in Big Little Books, Premiums, Disney Books and posters.

A Plan 9 from Outer Space 1 Sheet brought just under $1,400 Animation lots in the sale did not fare well, possibly because the quality was not there, however "fresh" pieces sold well. A great cel of Aurora from Sleeping Beauty brought $1,500 and a drawing of Mickey Mouse by Walt Disney from the Hugh Harmon estate fetched $3,080

In general this proved to be my highest grossing sale ever and was carried by a nice selection of new to the market pieces. There are too many overseen, re-offered pieces being placed at auction and offered on the market daily. New to the market and pieces that have been held for some time in private hands are the key to a successful sale

My next mail phone sale will be in the Fall of 1998. Part 2 of the Fred Cook collection will be featured. I will also offer my monthly auctions live at my gallery in Oceanside, New York, each of these sales features comics, animation, pulps, toys, trains, dolls and general collectibles.

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Our sales on high-end material have subsided a bit, but mail order sales on low to high grade Gold and Silver have increased with movement on '50's (any grade) memorabilia, fanzines and obscure paper material steadily climbing.

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Golden Age: Blazing #1 VG+ $71; Capt America #15 VG $350; Capt. Marvel #52 (Ohio) VF $109, Classics Ill. #43 (HRN62) VF $140; Feature #56 VG+ $45; Fam. Americans NN VF+ $118; Gene Autry #1 (Dell) VG $81, Popular #79 (Overstreet File) NM $121.

Atom Age: Crime Detector #1 VG+ $30; Famous Funnies #211 G/VG $75; If The Devil Would Talk '58 (File) NM $165; Teenage Rom #28, 29 F+/F $35@, Terror Ill. #1 FN+ $66

Silver Age: Batman #193 NM-$60; FF #92 (Ohio) VF $85, Green Lantern #59 NM- $105; Sgt. Fury (Co. Rvr.) #16 NM $94; #18 NM $85; #21 NM $50, SGF Lois Lane #38 VF+ $65.

Bronze Age: Batman #222 NM $37; New Gods #6 (Baxter) NM $20, Werewolf #1 NM $35, #2 NM $31, Young Love #107 NM $104.

Original Art: Jeff Austin unpublished Batgirl $93; Geoff Darrow pencil $45; Gil Kane Giant Sized Marvel Superheroes #1 pg 19 $97; O Barr Crow Sketch $242; Planet Comics #28 pg 12 $176; Hal Foster Sunday Page Color Proof from March 10, 1968 $71.

MARKETPLACE MAIL

Continued from page 14

heroes and other genres, and indeed if not for you a lot of people might not know there once were other genres! Also, the coverage of pulps and their ties to comics has been a delight, as I am a recent convert to the world of pulp fandom. I've been especially pleased with your coverage of the Silver Age Superman, via your wonderful articles on Curt Swan, Kurt Schaffenberger, Mort Weisinger, Jimmy & Lois, non-powered Superman, etc. It's reassuring to see that someone besides me remembers this is Superman's 60th anniversary and is willing to do something about it. I have watched with a mixture of amusement and disgust as DC struggles with the ironic, self-created dilemma of how to celebrate 60 years of a character when current editorial policy says to ignore—and when possible, denigrate—the first 50 of those years.

This brings me—sort of—to my second point, the much-discussed letter from young Mark Baumberger, the teenager who sees no merit in pre-1988 comics. I confess when I first read his letter, it was so perfectly nasty and inflammatory that I concluded it was a gag; just Mark's way of stirring up our ant hill to watch us scurry about in panic and rage. If so, he's succeeded—what other missive is still being discussed months after the fact? But if it was indeed sincere, I still say the problem is not so much Mark's attitude as the monster that inspired it, namely a comics industry that has no respect for its own roots and which has demonstrated a willingness to betray its oldest supporters for the sake of a quick buck. As they struggle against the inexorable downward spiral of sales, publishers of today could learn a thing or two by looking to their past. Once, publishers understood the importance of playing fairly with their readers, even if that meant taking a little extra time and effort to maintain a cohesive continuity or—gasp!—occasionally telling a complete story in one issue!

We "old-timers" remember our share of bad issues, don't get me wrong. In any "age" of comics there's more dreck than treasures. But the difference was that in the "old days" there were whole fictional worlds—like Weisinger's Superman universe—that we loved coming back to no matter how many times a writer goofed. The individual stories (or "events" as we'd call them today) were never as important as the bigger picture; the carefully crafted universes that might shake but would never fall. Maybe bottle cities and dogs with capes were silly concepts, but to this day they still give us a smile, don't they?

Today's publishers have bet everything on their ability to stay "cool," and as a result have jettisoned anything that seems remotely silly, endearing or cute, or to put it another way, anything a reader could possibly develop a fond nostalgia for. Already these publishers are learning a hard lesson, the first misstep they make, the moment they do anything the readers deem not so cool, the "dedicated" fans of today will leave them behind for the next fad, without so much as a look back.

Do we old-timers like silly stones? You bet! Ten or twenty years from now, will the Mark Baumbergers of the world be gathering together and swapping fond childhood memories of books like Spawn and Youngblood? No way! There are already too many magazines out there trying to be "Wizard" (I would say they're a dime a dozen, except they cost a fortune!!). Please, please don't follow Mark's advice and become another one. Keep putting out CBM just as it is; a haven of sanity, nostalgia and historical insight for those of us who remember a better time.

If it helps, I'll buy extra copies!

David Morefield, Virginia

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Retcon of the first order

Just wanted to point out two errors in Eric Brown's otherwise wonderful article on the Legion. First, Saturn Girl's first name is "Imra," not "Mira." Just a typo, I'm sure.

More significantly, Mr. Brown mentions an unnamed Legionnaire who looks "just like" Brainiac 5 in Adventure #247. Unfortunately, there is not any green-skinned Legionnaire in that first Legion story. According to current Legion colorist Tom McCraw, when DC reprinted the story (either or Silver Age Classics or the DC Archives series) and had it recolored, they directed him to change the coloring for some of those unnamed characters to transform them into Brainiac 5 and other characters who joined the Legion "before" Superboy (according to the subscribed-to continuity devised well after the original stories were published). You can check out either the original story or earlier reprints (like the '80's digests) for the real coloring. Brainiac 5's insertion into the "archive" reprints of that story are a retcon of the first order (and sort of saddening, in that it violates part of the concept of doing the Archives volumes).

Regardless of this small complaint, I really enjoyed the focus on the Legion (and Curt Swan). Well timed, too, just before the Legion's 40th anniversary.

(Hmm, speaking of Curt Swan, why does the checklist of his work cut off at 1975, other than being the end of the Silver Age? He continued doing work now and then into the '90's, including a couple of fondly-remembered pieces in the L.E.G.I.O.N. title. Oh, and another typo: the inker's name on page 29 is "Klein," not "Clein.")

Jim Drew via E-mail

We stand "korrected" Jim.

Disappointed kids

This is just some additional information I can add to Rick Roe's "Speak Out" piece in CBM #58. I actually own 2 copies of the Blue Circle #6 and can explain why Rick might have trouble matching up those contents to his cover, even if he owns them. There is also a difference in the covers of my copies from Rick's—mine both have, printed across the front, the words "Featuring... Martin Kane—Private Eye." And that is exactly what the contents contain. There is no mention of the Blue Circle superhero other than on the cover.

The interior contents are as follows: 1) Martin Kane, Private Eye in "Case of the Royal Rubies" (9pp); 2) William Gargan as Martin Kane, Private Eye in "Ballad of Death" (7pp); 3) text story—"A Date With Death" (2pp); 4) Martin Kane, Private Eye in "The King of Blackmail" (10pp), 5) William Gargan Junior Detective Club (2pp), and 6) a blank end-paper (2pp)

The contents are identical in both of my copies, so the book doesn't appear to be one of random remaindered comics. The indicia lists

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the book as vol. II, no. 3, April 1945. At the top of every story page are the words "Martin Kane Private Eye." It's published by Enwil Associates Inc. The cover appears to be something lying around bound with extra copies of the Martin Kane stories, though its true history may remain a mystery. I suspect there were a lot of disappointed kids in 1945 who thought they were buying a superhero book, as well.

Tim Cottrill, Ohio

Marvel pillows?

Was very happy and surprised to see my article on French artist Jean Frisano in CBM #54. The publication of the piece in your "beautiful mag" is a great tribute to one of France's favorite fantasy artists and the best recognition he can receive. I send you the thanks of the Frisano family as well.

On another note, while I was preparing an article about the beginnings of Marvel in France in 1969, I contacted many personalities. Turns out that Marvel offered some presents to French readers to launch the first title, Fantask. They were plastic pillows of Thor and Sub-Mariner. I found the Thor item advertised in comic books but not the Sub-Mariner. Do these items exist? (I know the Spider-Man pillow exists.)

My favorite articles so far are the Julius Schwartz tribute (thanks to Pat S. Calhoun) and Harry Matetsky's short piece on the wire comic racks. Ohhh they are so beautiful.... if I only had a time machine.... Long live your mag! I wait it impatiently every month.

Eric Vignolles, Talence, France

His work is a milestone

In the last few editions, CBM has done a wonderful job in researching the Superman/Superboy saga, through articles and interviews. Maybe it's time now to turn the focus to the 'great forgotten' artist of the said hero: Wayne Boring. His work is a milestone, solid and impressive, the transition between the semi-cartoony style that came from the '40s and the well-crafted renderings of the Silver Age. He's the link, with a remarkable style very much his own.

He is, however, unfairly forgotten; his name not but mentioned here and there, 'en passent.' No celebration around, rare and poor biographies, no photos. I've been wondering if your staff should correct that with the deep research Wayne Boring's influential work surely deserves. Wayne's case is, by the way, regrettably similar to Jesse Marsh's. Marsh is a 'great forgotten' too, whose delightful work is always shadowed by Foster and Hogarth's masterpieces on Tarzan's stunts.

One more request, if you please... try to find John Stanley and Irving Tripp for a talk on 'Little Lulu.' Not so difficult, I guess, as far as they've been available here and there at Comic Cons. Stanley, by the way, has even done some work in the horror field. That could be a topic for either Mr. Calhoun or Ms. Nolan! From your loyal reader, collector, and fan,

Jose Marcio C. Costa, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

You'll be happy to know that radio talk show host and comic historian Lynn Woolley is working on a Wayne Boring article for Comic Book Marketplace #63!

Why no address?

For me CBM is a vital part of my hobby, just as vital as the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide and almost as important as my comics. Please don't ever cancel CBM again. I was very disappointed when the original CBM was discontinued with issue #21.

I'm not going to go into individual reviews of articles and contributors, that would take far too long. I will tell all your contributors to take a bow and give yourselves a pat on the back for a job well done. This includes the CBM staff as well. You have to love what you're doing to put out a magazine of this caliber every month... and it shows!

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I have a question about something that's been on my mind for some time now. Most knowledgeable collectors are aware that Julie Schwartz gave fandom a big boost in the early years by printing the full address of those fans who wrote in to his comics. CBM is a fanzine, the best ever produced, by fans for fans. So why doesn't CBM print the full address of letter writers and contributors unless, of course, individuals ask that this not be done? Is there a legal problem? Do you need written permission? I suppose people could write each other care of CBM, but wouldn't it be easier for all concerned if people could write directly to one another? It's no big deal, but I am curious.

Before I sign off, let me say thanks for giving me a forum for expressing my opinions and sharing what I've learned about our hobby. Finally, let me say, you have my full support whether it be as a subscriber, a contributor, or in some other way.

Sterling Dashiell, Virginia

Your loyalty is much appreciated, Sterling. And you're right, there are certain legal issues with printing addresses. However, we have forwarded many letters from CBMers to other readers as well as artists, writers, and publishers. All we ask is that an additional stamped envelope be included. I'm looking forward to your next contribution!

A wife and kids and a mortgage

Hello Gary and all the folks at CBM. I have never written a letter to your magazine before. I have read this great magazine for several years now. I am writing about all the complaints about the reprint issues (#56). I am convinced that the majority of readers of CBM were as overjoyed as I to get a second chance to read the great articles that we missed the first time around. I am really sick of this small circle of elitist comic snobs crying about what the majority of fans that enjoy your magazine want. Some of us can't afford to get a subscription.

Some of us have a wife and kids and a mortgage and have to get our issues one month at a time. And sometimes we miss a issue or two. Judging from the back issues that are sold out, the majority of fans are missing the same issues as I am. I for one was very happy to get a second chance to read the Neal Adams issue. I looked for the original issue in every comic shop in Orange and Riverside county, and a few in L.A. I think that instead of complaining about something that happens on rare occasions, we should be focusing on how lucky we, the readers of CBM, are to have such a fine publication. I stopped collecting comics several years ago. I find that I am still able to feel the joy of collecting by reading a magazine that is put out by people that actually care about and love the hobby. I have learned more about comics reading CBM than I ever did as a collector.

CBM cares about what the readers like and want. I love this magazine and will gladly pay the extra dollar. It's obvious to anyone with a brain that CBM has no shortage of articles or talent to write them. Reprinting the stories was done for the many. If CBM catered to the few, the magazine would have died a long time ago. So I just want to tell everyone at CBM that you have my support and as far as I am concerned, keep the reprints.

Grant Watson, California

Adventure Comics

I'm a first time letter writer ever to any magazine. Anyway, having bought CBM sporadically since #22-40 and religiously since, your publication has become invaluable to my collection.

I collect DC mainly (1960's annuals, specials and S-series giants, 100 pgs, 80 pgs, 52 and 48 pgs, 25¢ers). A checklist of the early 25¢ers would sure be nice. Originally collected from 1971-74 and started again in 1989.

Articles on Adams, O'Neil, Kubert, Swan, Cardy, Eisner, Heath are unmatched in any other similar magazine—keep them coming. I recently discovered Steranko and John Romita Sr. issues at my local store, amazingly buried in back issue magazines—was very pleased.

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I also collect any 100 issues, 200, 300 etc. issue #22-42 is always open for quick reference (a checklist here beyond 11 would be interesting since only the classics would be represented). Hope you can do it in a future issue.

How about a multi-issue feature of Adventure Comics, so many different incarnations over the years. It was one of my favorites. Still searching for #500 a reprint digest, can anybody help with info about where to find one, would be greatly appreciated.

Don't change your format. Keep up the great work. Just wanted to remind you #22 was 80 pages for $3.95, three years later we're paying $2.00 (50%) more for same page count. Inflation sucks but hasn't national average been under 3% annually, seems a little high.

Other than that, I love you man!

Edward L. Bauman, Washington

DC Silver Age prototypes

With so much attention going to the Marvel Silver Age prototypes that appear in their horror/mystery books of the late '50s/early '60s, I think it's time collectors out there search for DC Silver Age "prototypes."

Here's one to get people started: Prototype for the Doom Patrol's Negative Man can be found in House of Mystery #84 (March 1959)—an 8 pager titled "The Negative Man" features powers (and even bandages) similar to the later Doom Patrol version. The artist is Jack Kirby, no less! I'm sure there are more prototypes out there, with a majority probably being DC Silver Age villains.

Chris Bonham, California

Pretty lofty legacy

In his very entertaining article, "The Strange Lives of Jimmy & Lois" in CBM #59, David Grisez mentioned that some collectors and historians believe that Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane #1 (March/April 1958) should be considered the first comic book of the Silver Age, rather than Showcase #4 (September/October 1956). I certainly don't intend to disparage this line of reasoning, particularly since I once suggested the same claim to fame for Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #1 (September/October 1954). Both Jimmy and Lois were certainly the most successful character-based "first issues" published by DC in the 1950s, but I don't think that distinction in and of itself is enough to hang a "first Silver Age comic" hat on. While Jimmy and Lois fall safely into the superhero genre, neither title character themself is a superhero, so what we're actually talking about are sidekick comics, not strictly superhero comics. In other words, Jimmy and Lois, as comic books, share a common lineage with the likes of The Lone Ranger's Companion Tonto, Marge's Tubby, Little Max and Archie's Girls, Betty and Veronica, rather than with original efforts like Captain Flash and Challengers of the Unknown, and Nature Boy.

The key point to focus on is: Why was Showcase #4 the launching pad of the Silver Age, rather than Jimmy or Lois, or Detective #225, or Young Men #24, or any other comic book of the mid-1950s? In other words, what are Showcase #4's claims to fame? Let's look at some reasons why that comic was so important:

1) The Flash's revival led to the subsequent revival of more DC superheroes, such as Green Lantern, the Atom, Hawkman, and probably most importantly, to the revival of the team book, Justice League of America.

2) By the same token, DC's revival of superheroes led to the revival of superheroes by virtually every other comics publisher in the1960s.

3) The Flash's revival was successful and lasted for decades, unlike the Atlas revival of Captain America, Human Torch and Sub-Mariner in 1953-55, a resurrection attempt that never really took. Similarly, original superhero titles such as Captain Flash and Nature Boy that predate Showcase #4 don't win the distinction as the first Silver Age comic book, either, since these comic books were failures. And J'onn J'onzz was never

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more than a back-up character in Detective, and his creation had virtually no impact on the comics industry at all.

4) The Flash also led, directly or indirectly, to the emergence of an active and vocal comics fandom thanks in large part to the letter pages of Julius Schwartz's superhero comics, all of which were descended from that single comic book, Showcase #4.

That's a pretty lofty legacy for one comic book, and it's no disparagement to Jimmy and Lois that their first issues don't quite stack up against Showcase #4. Not even Fantastic Four #1 or Amazing Fantasy #15 quite fit the bill, either!

Dave Blanchard, Ohio

Robot Monster

Addition to being an avid (some would say obsessed!) horror comic collector, I also enjoy classic (and not so classic!) horror and science fiction movies. One film that most of us know is Robot Monster from 1953. You know—the really, really bad one with the monster that is a guy in a gorilla suit with a diving helmet on his head?! This wonderfully awful film (originally released in 3D!) is an all time favorite of mine that I hadn't seen since I was a child, so I eagerly tuned in for a rare showing recently (at 3:00 am!) on a local station.

One thing that I didn't remember from long ago is the opening credits—which roll across an amazing back-drop collage of then current comics! Among the beauties are Strange Stories from Another World #5 (twice!), 7 & 8 (twice!), Norm Saunders's amazing Worlds of Fear #10 cover, Strange Suspense Stories #5 (twice—one with Robot Monster pasted over the masthead!), Underworld Crime #6 and an issue of John Carter of Mars! What a nice stack of books! It's pretty heavy on the Fawcett—I wonder if there is any connection?

Needless to say, the opening (and closing) credits sequence alone has elevated this Golden Turkey award winner even further up onto my all-time favorites list!

Mike Howlett, Massachusetts

Well-trained orangutan

Just wanted to drop a quick note to tell you issue #59 was great!! I've long been a fan of Mr. Schaffenberger's work, and quickly scooped up this issue when I saw his name grace the front cover. I'm not in agreement with his comment on inking, especially the part about 'a very well-trained orangutan should be able to do it.' Also the part about inkers not being able to improve a job. This is pure nonsense! There are many instances where the inker has to put up with rough pencils, and fill in details.

Oh, well. Overall, a very nice interview with lots of great samples of KS's art. Bravo! Bravo!

P.S. He uses a Winsor Newton #1 brush…? Who'da thought? Maybe I'll try it some time…

R. Persaud, New York

Struck a chord within me

Congratulations on issue #60 (I would have said "perfect" but I don't want you getting a swelled head)! When you feature articles on Reed Crandall and the Blackhawks you can't go wrong! Reed was a titanic talent who is sorely missed today. I still get a charge when I read one of my Quality Blackhawks and enjoy the entertaining, clear and concise storyline coupled with the uncluttered and dynamic art of Mr. Crandall. Top-rate articles by Messrs. Gleeson and Hill!

The article "Bad For Kids?" struck a chord within me. I have two teenage sons and they, for the most part, have given up reading comics and I can't blame them! Today's "heroes" are overdeveloped, neurotic anti-heroes who are not positive images for anyone, let alone the youth of America. When I was a kid, I always wanted to be like Batman but now he's some obsessed anti-social freak in the comics and a laughable clown in the movies. A reflection of the times? You tell me!

Thank God (and Kurt Busiek) for "Astro City!"

I'm falling off my soapbox so it's time to sign off and say thanks for another great issue!

Eric G. Blackmore, Tennessee

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Scurrying to the back-issue bins

Where would we be without CBM? I know of no other publication that gives the details and insight into the hobby that you do. The others focus almost exclusively on current comics, and although there are a few books on the stands that I currently read, often I leave the local comic store empty handed or perhaps treat myself with a Silver Age issue because I find the current crop lacking. Most of the new books I see on the racks are excessively wordy with over emphasis on some convoluted semi-hip dialogue, featuring scantily clad vixens who seem to enjoy achieving unnatural poses that accentuate their bodies. I remember reading the '60's Kirby Thor issues with glee, marveling at the imagination and skill of the craftsmen involved. Spider clone? Superman red and blue? X-flavor of the week? Who cares? I would rather re-read almost any Silver Age issue than suffer through most of this inferior material.

On a more positive note, I find your magazine highly entertaining and informative and look forward to the next issue. One recurring feature that many readers enjoy (myself included) is the cover art section. These beautiful reproductions have sent me scurrying to the back issue bins more than once in search of featured books. How about a gallery of Star Spangled War dinosaur covers? Has CBM ever considered publishing a special issue of all cover art, a la Gerber but covering the issues they didn't? I know they are working on the Silver DC version but even allowing for that there is plenty of great unpublished work to pick from. Thank you and keep up the good work!

Doug Randell, California

Goofy grandeur

Thanks for paying tribute to the late Mr. Samm Schwartz (CBM #58). I had never heard his name but sure had enjoyed his art. What a terrific attitude he expressed about his work. Thanks also for reprinting the Neal Adams retrospective (CBM #56). I learned why I enjoyed his early (World's Finest and Superman family) covers best: he wasn't working from photographs. To me his more photographic Green Lantern/ Deadman/Batman art high-

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lights how ridiculous the idea of someone in tights fighting crime is, especially when accompanied by pompous, overwrought, emoting and clenched teeth/muscles flexed declamatory speechifying (and mid-1960's Batman is called campy? I'll take his goofy grandeur over anyone's violent, dreary, monochromatically dark "graphic" novel).

Further, if the juxtaposition of "head shots" created by legendary DC artists (Messrs. Swan, Sekowsky, Infantino, Anderson, and Kane) with those of Mr. Adams was supposed to express a qualitative difference it failed. (Over) realism is no substitute for style, an ability to charm and delight young and old alike, which the above artists have/had plenty of.

Wesley Voyles, North Carolina

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:

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